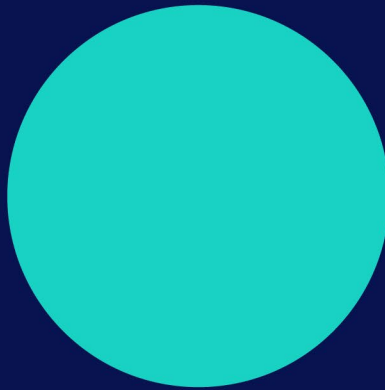
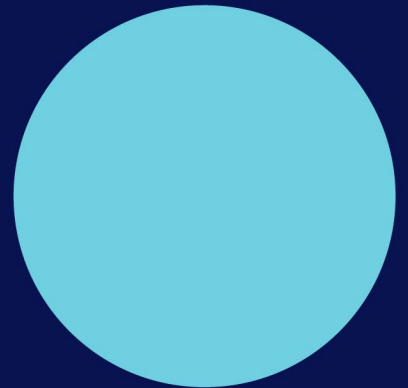
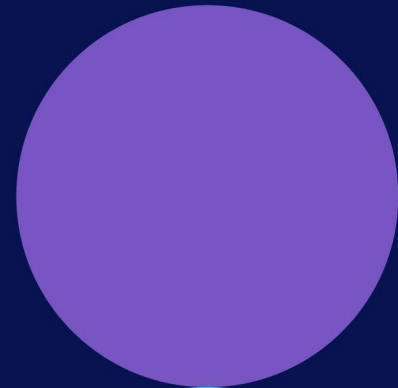


Reed
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Salary guide 2026

**Engineering &
manufacturing**

Navigating the new jobs landscape



James Reed CBE
Chairman and CEO, Reed

Welcome to our 2026 salary guides. As we look ahead, it is clear that the UK labour market is navigating one of the most profound transformations in living memory. In my four decades in recruitment, I have never witnessed a period of such rapid and fundamental change.

Our economic landscape has defied traditional expectations. Historically, periods of economic growth have aligned with rising job vacancies, but that relationship is no longer guaranteed. Recent trends suggest a structural shift in the labour market, where vacancy levels can decline even as the economy expands. This disconnect signals deeper changes in how businesses approach hiring and workforce planning. For employers and jobseekers alike, understanding these dynamics is critical - because the old assumption that growth equals more jobs is increasingly outdated.

The AI revolution: A white-collar recession

One of the primary drivers behind this permanent change to the jobs market, alongside policy, regulation, changing worker expectations, globalisation and supply chain pressures, I believe is artificial intelligence. The advancement and adoption of AI technologies have been breathtakingly fast, and its appetite for consuming tasks, particularly in white-collar professions, is the biggest story of our time.

AI is incredibly effective at reducing costs for employers, and it achieves this primarily by reducing the number of employees required. This is not a distant, future threat; it is happening right now. A recent survey we conducted of 500 companies revealed that 15%

were already reducing their hiring plans specifically because of the arrival of AI. Combined with other pressures, such as National Insurance increases and general hiring freezes, the overall impact on job creation has been noticeable.

We are witnessing what I term a 'white-collar recession,' which mirrors the blue-collar recession of the 1980s when automation hollowed out many industrial and manufacturing jobs. Today, it is entry-level and process-driven roles in sectors like administration, finance, and even law that are being consumed. These are the traditional gateways for many professionals starting their careers, and their rapid decline poses a significant threat to social mobility and future workforce development. The very nature of what constitutes a 'good job' is being redefined before our eyes. Roles that once seemed secure and promised a stable career path are now vulnerable to automation. This forces us, as employers and as a society, to rethink our approach to education, skills, and career progression.



The advancement and adoption of AI technologies have been breathtakingly fast, and its appetite for consuming tasks, particularly in white-collar professions, is the biggest story of our time.



The graduate dilemma: A shrinking horizon

Nowhere is this shift more acutely felt than among our young people and recent graduates. The data is deeply concerning. Our own figures at Reed show that the number of graduate jobs advertised on Reed.co.uk has plummeted from around 180,000 just a few years ago to a mere 50,000 at the end of 2025. This represents a staggering two-thirds reduction in opportunities for those leaving higher education. Other job sites are reporting similar, sobering figures. This is not just a dip; it is a collapse in the entry-level market.

This 'graduate crunch' is creating a generation of highly educated individuals who are struggling to find a foothold in the professional world. Nearly half of all jobs lost since mid-2024 have been among those under 25, and youth unemployment has soared to its highest level in a decade, excluding the pandemic period standing at 15.3%. The UK's top 100 employers reduced their graduate hiring by 14.6% in 2024, the steepest fall since the 2009 recession.

For those who do manage to secure a role, the rewards are often diminished. We are seeing entry-level graduate jobs offering salaries that are perilously close to the minimum wage, especially when factoring in the long hours often expected of new recruits. This situation challenges the long-held assumption that a university degree is a guaranteed ticket to a prosperous career. We must encourage aspiring families and young people to broaden their horizons. While a degree remains valuable, it is no longer the only path.

The jobs that are proving most resilient to the AI wave are those that require a human touch, creativity, and manual dexterity. Roles in skilled trades, hospitality, and healthcare, for example, involve a level of nuanced interaction and physical skill that AI is far from replicating. We must guide the next generation towards developing practical, hands-on skills. Learning to do things with your hands, whether in a highly educated field like osteopathy or a skilled trade, is becoming an increasingly wise career strategy.

Thriving through purpose: The PhilCo advantage

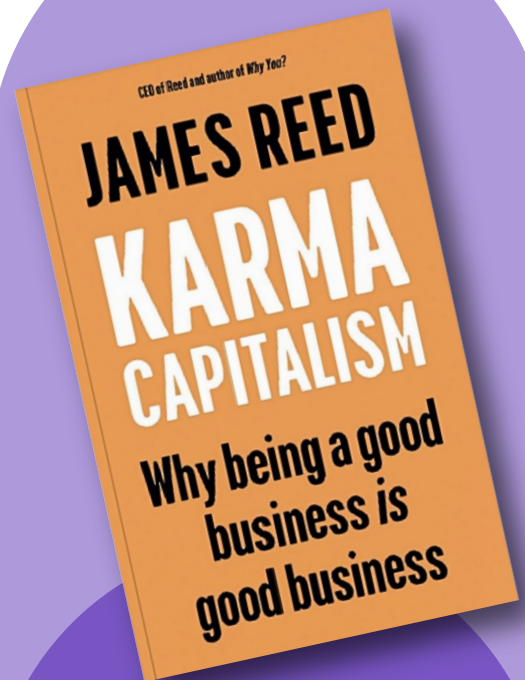
In this challenging environment, how can businesses not only survive but thrive? How can you attract and retain the talent you need when the market is so volatile? The answer, I believe, lies in purpose. Today's employees, especially the younger generation, are not just looking for a salary; they are seeking meaning and a sense of contribution from their work. This is where the concept of a philanthropic company, or PhilCo, becomes a powerful competitive advantage.

A **PhilCo** is a business that has committed a significant portion of its ownership - typically 10% or more - to a charitable foundation. At Reed, we are proud to be a PhilCo, with 18% of our company owned by the Reed Foundation. This is not just a footnote in our corporate structure; it is a

fundamental part of our identity. It means that a portion of our success is directly channelled back into the community. Our dividends help fund a wide array of good causes, many through our partnership with the Big Give, which has raised hundreds of millions for thousands of charities.

Being a PhilCo has a tangible and profound impact on our business. It is a cornerstone of our employee engagement strategy. Our team members - known as co-members - know that their hard work contributes to something larger than the bottom line. This shared purpose fosters a culture of responsibility, collaboration, and pride. It creates a powerful reason for people to join us and, just as importantly, to stay with us.

As hyper-capitalism has created vast inequalities - with the top one per cent in the UK holding more wealth than the bottom 70% - models like the PhilCo movement offer a way to transform business for good. It aligns profit with people and the planet, ensuring that corporate success contributes to societal wellbeing. This is not just corporate social responsibility; it is a sustainable and highly impactful business model for the 21st century.



Find out more about being a PhilCo in James' book 'Karma Capitalism, Why being a good business is good business'

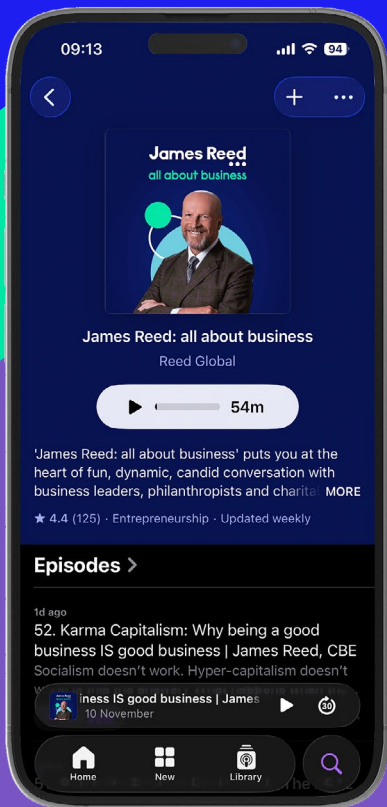
A look to the future

The road ahead is undoubtedly challenging. The forces of AI, economic uncertainty, and shifting market dynamics require us all to be more agile, more innovative, and more people centric than ever before. For employers, this means rethinking recruitment strategies. You must look beyond traditional qualifications and focus on skills, adaptability, resilience and potential. It means investing in upskilling and reskilling your existing workforce to meet the demands of the new economy. And it means building a strong employer brand rooted in a genuine purpose that will attract the best people.

For individuals, the message is clear: continuous learning is no longer optional. Developing a diverse skill set, particularly one that blends technical knowledge with people-centric abilities like communication, empathy, and critical thinking, will be crucial. We must all become lifelong learners to stay relevant and valuable in this evolving landscape.

These salary guides are designed to provide you with the data and insights you need to navigate this complex environment. They offer a benchmark for compensation in a time of great flux, helping you make informed decisions to attract and retain the talent that will drive your organisation forward. While the headlines may be daunting, there is always opportunity in disruption. By understanding these trends and adapting proactively, we can build a more resilient, skilled, and purposeful workforce for the future.

James Reed CBE
Chairman and CEO, Reed



Listen to James Reed's podcast 'all about business'.

Hosted by **James Reed CBE**, the Chairman and CEO of Reed Group, you'll hear the highs and lows of what it means to be a true business leader to empower you to implement smarter, more meaningful strategy in your business or career.

[Listen here](#)

Why use Reed's engineering & manufacturing salary guide?

For both jobseekers and employers alike, Reed's salary guide stands as an invaluable resource, offering unparalleled insights to keep you well-informed and ahead of the curve in 2026.



Unmatched data insights

This comprehensive guide draws upon a vast dataset derived from over 18 million jobs posted on **Reed.co.uk** since 2017, solidifying its status as the most trusted salary guide in existence. The analysis of such an extensive volume of data offers an unparalleled view of the sector, ensuring accuracy and reliability.



Local and national expertise

Our specialism expert provides key insight into the sector, with Reed's regional directors discussing the local job landscape. This distinctive perspective, not available elsewhere, enhances the guide's richness and relevance.



Evolving landscapes and emerging trends

Delving into the intricacies of roles across 12 UK regions, our guide highlights noteworthy developments using graphics to depict key salary changes over the past year. With a robust dataset spanning four years, it includes salary projections for the upcoming year and average salary data dating back to 2017.

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Engineering and manufacturing: Navigating a sector in flux

Kimberly Hunsdon

Regional Manager and
Engineering & Manufacturing Expert, Reed



The engineering and manufacturing sector continues to be a cornerstone of the UK economy, demonstrating remarkable resilience and adaptability. As we progress further into 2026, the industry is not just navigating economic pressures but actively reshaping its future through innovation, strategic workforce development, and a renewed focus on what truly attracts and retains talent. While familiar challenges such as skills shortages persist, a new landscape is emerging, defined by creative benefits, evolving work structures, and a pragmatic shift in employee expectations.

For both employers and professionals, understanding these undercurrents is essential for success.

A creative approach to compensation and benefits

For the past few years, the narrative has been consistent: a shortage of skilled engineering and manufacturing professionals has given jobseekers the upper hand in salary negotiations. While this leverage hasn't disappeared, the economic climate has forced a change in strategy. Many businesses, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), simply lack the financial firepower to engage in bidding wars or meet ever-increasing salary demands. This has prompted a pivot towards more creative and holistic compensation packages.

Instead of focusing solely on monetary figures, employers are enhancing their offerings with benefits that improve work-life balance and provide long-term value. One of the most significant shifts has been the adoption of flexible working hours, even within the traditionally rigid manufacturing environment. Companies are implementing 'core hours' systems that allow employees to start earlier and finish earlier, accommodating personal responsibilities like school runs and enabling people to miss the rush hour traffic. This flexibility appeals to a broader demographic, helping to attract people that might otherwise have been excluded from a standard nine-to-five structure.

Beyond flexible hours, businesses are exploring other non-monetary perks. While benefits like private medical insurance remain largely reserved for senior management due to the high cost associated, employers are leveraging other advantages such as increased time off or enhanced pension contributions. The goal is to create an attractive proposition that doesn't rely on an unsustainable salary. This approach reflects a growing understanding that today's professionals are looking for more than just a pay cheque - they want a supportive work environment that values their wellbeing.

The evolving expectations of jobseekers

In response to the market's financial constraints, professionals' expectations are also beginning to recalibrate. After a period where demanding and receiving higher salaries was commonplace, professionals are now taking a more pragmatic approach. They are starting to recognise that relentless salary chasing can lead to instability. The security of a stable role, a positive working environment, and opportunities for development are becoming equally, if not more, important.

Progression is a key motivator, but its definition has

broadened. It no longer exclusively means a direct path to a management position. For many, progression now encompasses acquiring new skills, working on diverse and interesting projects, or developing expertise in a new area. They are looking for roles that will expand their professional toolkit and keep them engaged.

This shift presents an opportunity for employers. By digging deeper into a person's motivations beyond their initial salary request, businesses can often uncover other needs that can be met. A role offering unique project work, investment in training, or a clear path for skill development can be more appealing than one that simply offers a slightly higher wage.

Tackling the skills shortage with innovation

The skills gap in engineering and manufacturing is a well-documented and persistent challenge. However, the industry is responding with innovative and socially conscious initiatives aimed at building a sustainable talent pipeline. Employers are increasingly recognising that they cannot simply wait for qualified individuals to appear, they must actively participate in creating them.

One of the most forward-thinking approaches involves partnerships between businesses, local councils, and even the prison system. In one such initiative, a company has secured funding to build a training facility within a prison, offering inmates the chance to complete a four-year engineering apprenticeship. Upon release, these individuals possess a valuable, in-demand skill set and are offered employment opportunities. This model serves a dual purpose: it directly addresses the company's need for skilled workers while providing a pathway to rehabilitation and reducing reoffending. Such programmes demonstrate a powerful commitment to corporate social responsibility and offer a long-term solution to talent shortages.

Apprenticeships and early-career training remain fundamental to the industry's future. However, businesses can face financial hurdles when trying to implement these schemes. By collaborating with government bodies and local authorities, companies can find the support needed to invest in the next generation of engineers and technicians.

A resurgence in contract and project-based work

While the permanent market remains active, the end of 2025 saw a noticeable uptick in demand for contractors and project-based workers. This trend is driven by several factors, chief among them being headcount restrictions. When a

business has an urgent need for a specific skill set but is unable to add a permanent employee to the payroll, hiring a contractor provides a flexible and effective solution.

This approach is particularly prevalent in areas like design and maintenance. For example, when a company is implementing a new production line or undertaking a significant project, it may bring in contractors for a three-to-six-month period. This allows their permanent, resident engineers to focus on the project work without neglecting routine preventative or reactive maintenance. The contract team provides essential cover, ensuring that day-to-day operations continue to run smoothly.

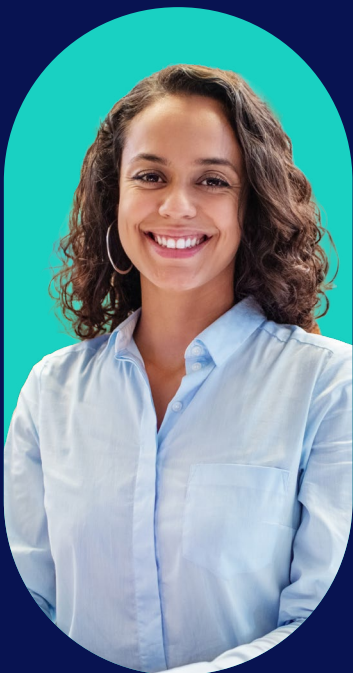
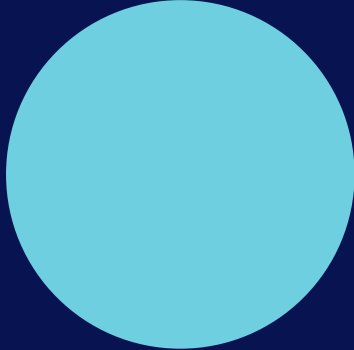
We are also seeing an increase in long-term contracting arrangements, with some professionals working on a single site for several years. This provides businesses with consistent, specialised expertise without the long-term commitment of a permanent hire, offering a blend of stability and flexibility that suits both parties.

The impact of technology: AI and automation

The integration of automation, robotics, and artificial intelligence is transforming the manufacturing floor. Rather than displacing human workers, this technology is augmenting their roles and enhancing productivity. It trades one skill set for another, creating a need for professionals who can operate, maintain, and work alongside these advanced systems.

For example, a company producing modular homes may use robotics for certain parts of the assembly process. However, the efficiency of the robotic section is dependent on the pre- and post-production stages, which still require manual fabrication and assembly. The technology acts as an aid to facilitate a process, not a complete replacement for the human workforce. It allows businesses to utilise their employees' time more effectively, shifting their focus to more complex or value-added tasks.

As technology continues to advance, the emphasis will be on upskilling and reskilling the existing workforce. Employees will need to adapt to new ways of working and develop the technical proficiency required to manage these sophisticated systems. This evolution doesn't diminish the need for people; it enhances their capabilities and changes the nature of their contribution.



Our survey says...

At the end of 2025, Reed conducted its annual snap survey of 5,000 professionals. The research asked UK workers about their current and preferred salary and benefits, their organisation's performance and priorities, how they rated their job satisfaction and career prospects, as well as the key recruitment and skills trends they're witnessing.

Here are the top trends that the survey revealed:

1. Financial strain is widespread

The overwhelming reason for salary dissatisfaction (52% of unhappy respondents) is that pay hasn't kept pace with the cost of living. This far outweighs other factors, such as workload or industry pay.

- **Declining affordability:** Only a quarter of the population (25%) feels they're earning more in terms of what they can afford compared to four years ago, before the cost-of-living crisis.

- **Limited disposable income:** A concerning 26% of respondents have **£100 or less leftover** each month after essential bills, with seven per cent stating their entire salary goes to essentials. This highlights a struggle for many to save or enjoy non-essential spending.

2. The growing 'comfort gap'

There is a stark **£11,110.38 gap** between what people are currently earning and what they say is their comfortable living wage.

- **Desired vs. current earnings:** Our research found the average current annual salary is **£40,638.35**. However, the average income people believe they need to live comfortably is **£51,748.73**.

3. Salary remains the dominant job motivator

To switch jobs, individuals expect a substantial average pay increase of **£12,139.55**. This is significantly higher than the average **£3,923.62** pay rise that would satisfy them at their current employer, indicating a clear financial incentive is needed to overcome the inertia of changing roles.

- **Increased importance:** A vast majority (73%) report that salary is more important now when considering new job opportunities than it was before the cost-of-living crisis - 40% even say it's "significantly more important".
- **Higher progression expectations:** Nearly half of the 5,000 people surveyed (44%) have increased their expectations for salary progression within their current role over the last four years.

4. Benefits are secondary to cash

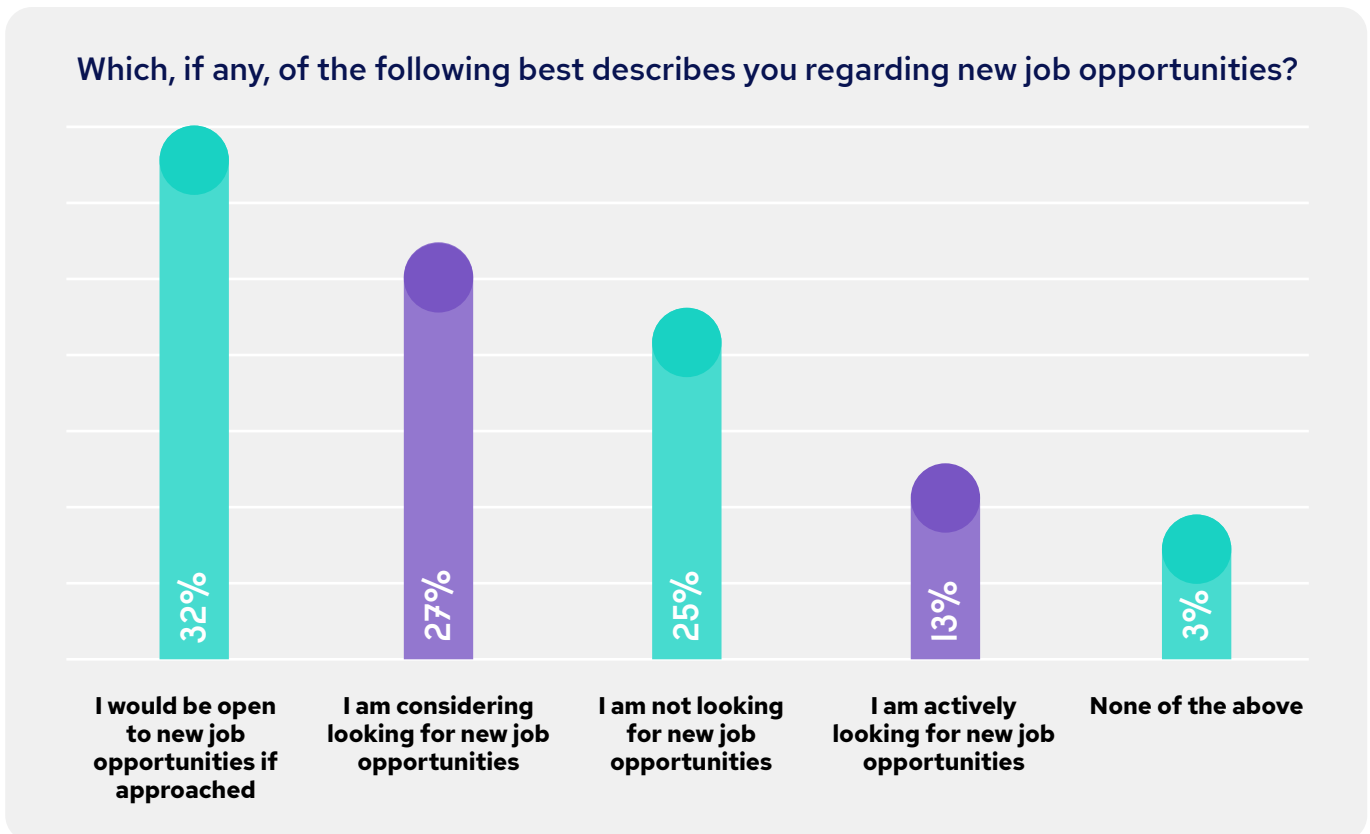
Many employees are willing to sacrifice 'soft' benefits like free refreshments (11%), cycle-to-work schemes (11%), onsite parking (eight per cent), and wellness programmes (seven per cent) for higher pay. Even some 'harder' benefits like health insurance are on the table for six per cent of those who took part.

- **Underutilised benefits:** Some commonly offered benefits, such as cycle-to-work schemes (11% unused) and the ability to purchase additional annual leave (seven per cent unused), are not being fully utilised by employees. This suggests that while benefits are appreciated, their perceived value can be lower than direct cash compensation, especially in the current financial climate.
- **Prevalence of benefits:** Common benefits include onsite parking (27%), hybrid working (23%), and Christmas shutdown (21%). However, 15% of respondents receive no benefits at all.

5. A highly mobile workforce

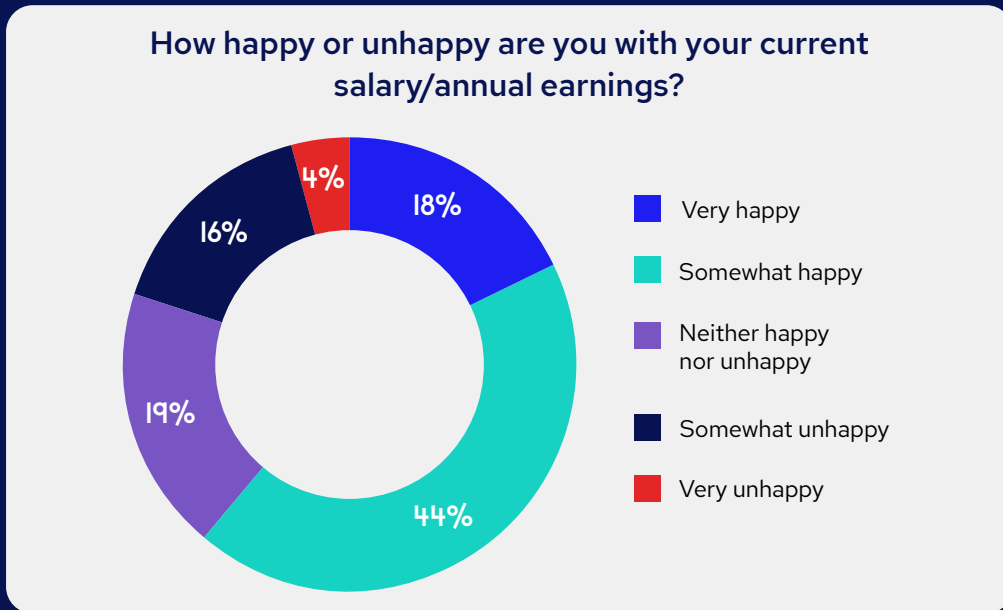
While the **average tenure is 8.54 years**, the high openness to new roles suggests that even long-serving employees are not immune to the pull of better compensation.

- **Open to new opportunities:** A significant majority (72%) of the workforce is considering a new role. A third (32%) are open to new job opportunities if approached, 27% are considering looking and 13% are actively looking. Only a quarter of employees (25%) are not looking for a new job opportunity at all.



Money, money, money

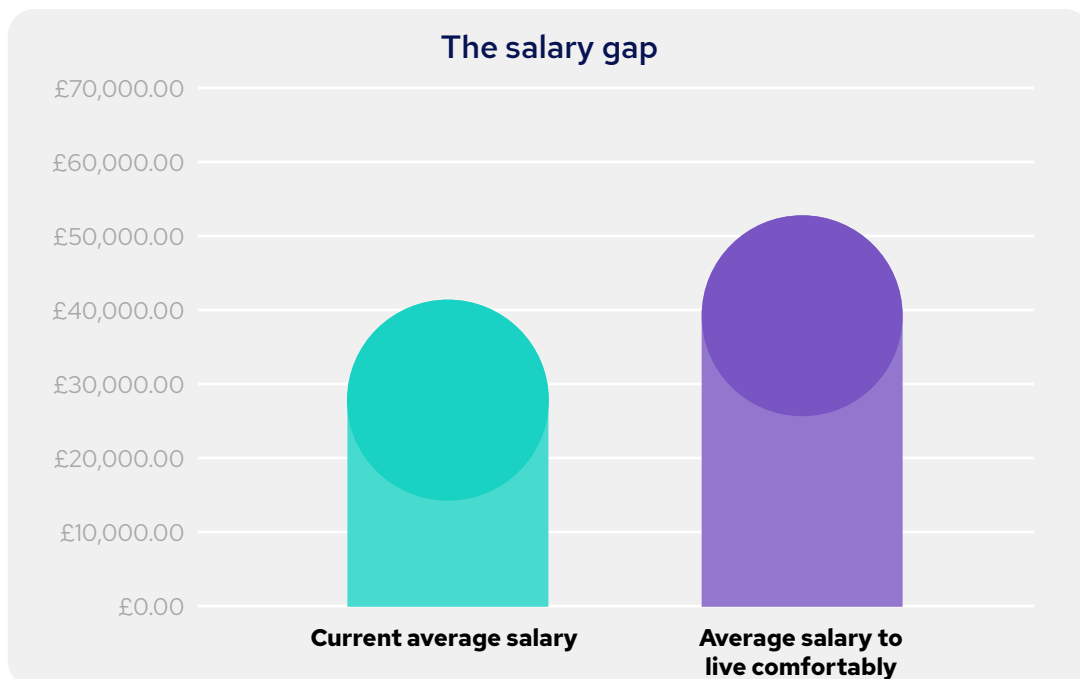
With ongoing cost-of-living challenges, salaries continue to be a huge area of discussion in the employment market, for both professionals and businesses. The data reveals the UK workforce is under significant financial pressure, with a clear and growing emphasis on salary as a primary driver of job satisfaction and career decisions.



Currently, over half (61%) of workers are happy with the pay they receive. However, that leaves a significant 20% of professionals feeling unhappy with their current salary, and another 19% feeling ambivalent (“neither happy nor unhappy”).

Of those who are unhappy, the overwhelming reason, cited by over half (52%), is that their pay hasn’t risen with the cost of living. Other key reasons include feeling they “do so much more than my job role” (39%), being “unable to save enough to meet my financial goals” (37%), and their salary “not being enough to live the lifestyle I want” (35%).

The disparity between the average current wage and the salary people would be comfortable with remains substantial. This year, the average current salary for survey respondents stands at **£40,638.35**. However, the average income people believe they need to live comfortably is **£51,748.73**, representing an average **£11,110.38 gap**. This ‘comfort gap’ indicates a widespread desire for higher earnings.



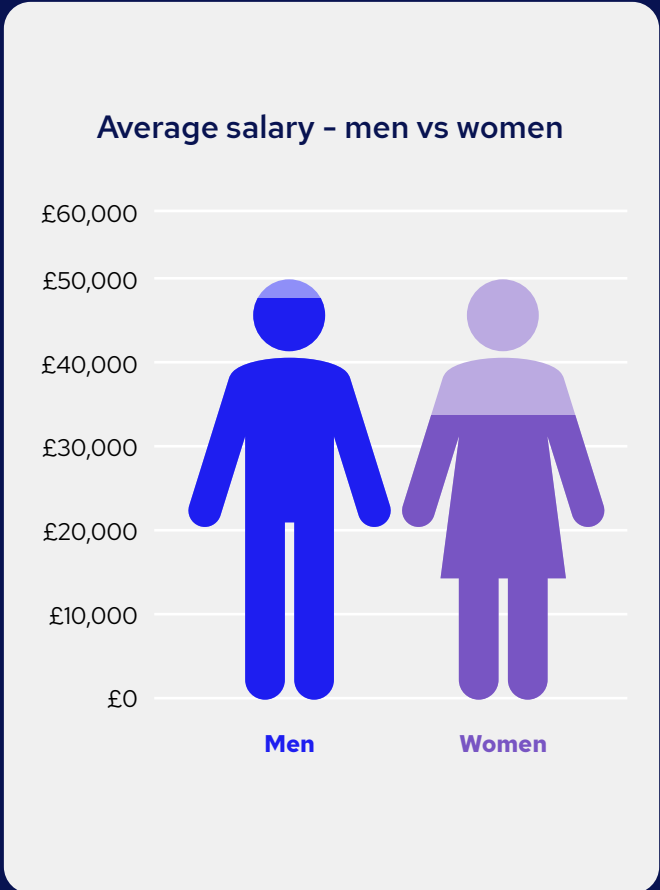
The financial strain is evident in monthly disposable income. A concerning **seven per cent of respondents have £0 leftover** each month after essential bills, with their entire salary going towards necessities. Overall, **26% have £100 or less remaining** for non-essential spending, savings, or leisure.



As a direct consequence of the financial climate as we enter 2026, 73% of professionals state that salary is more important now than it was before the cost-of-living crisis began in 2021, with 40% saying it is "significantly more important." Expectations for salary progression within the same role have also increased for 44% of workers. **To switch jobs, individuals expect a substantial average pay increase of £12,139.55.**

A deeper dive...

- Gender pay gap:** There remains a significant gender pay gap. The survey found that on average, men earn £48,367.15, while women earn £33,852.12, **a difference of over £14,500**. This disparity extends to satisfaction: 66% of men are happy with their salary compared to 57% of women, and women are more unhappy (24%) than men (16%). Men also perceive a higher comfortable salary (£59,688.07) than women (£44,707.25).
- Disposable income gap:** Women have significantly less disposable income, with an average of £626.61 left over monthly compared to £983.38 for men. Women are also twice as likely to have £0 leftover.
- Age and earnings:** Current salaries peak in the 25-34 age group (£49,853.43), while the desired comfortable income peaks in the 25-34 age group (£65,341.10). Salary satisfaction is highest for younger workers (18-34) and lowest for the 45-54 age group, where only 51% are happy with their pay. This 45-54 age group also reports the highest percentage (nine per cent) with £0 leftover monthly.
- Job mobility:** Younger workers (18-34) are most willing to change jobs for salary increases, while older workers (55+) are significantly less likely to change jobs for more money, indicating that other factors become more important with age.



All about the benefits

While offering a higher salary remains the most direct way to attract and retain employees, the benefits package also plays a role, especially for businesses unable to match top-tier salaries. **However, 15% of respondents currently say they receive no workplace benefits at all.**

Commonly offered benefits include onsite parking (27%), hybrid working (23%), and Christmas shutdown (21%). However, there's a noticeable disconnect between offered and desired benefits, and also a willingness to sacrifice many perks for higher pay.



A deeper dive...

- **Sacrificing perks for pay:** Many employees are willing to sacrifice 'soft' benefits for higher pay. Free refreshments (11%) and cycle to work schemes (11%) are the benefits most employees would be willing to give up.
- **Age and benefits:** Younger workers (25-34) are most willing to sacrifice benefits for higher pay, while older workers (55+) are significantly less willing to do so, suggesting they value their existing benefits more.
- **Gender benefit gap:** Women are more likely to receive no benefits (17% vs. 12% for men) and, on average, men report receiving more benefits overall.

Key takeaways for businesses:

Over two-thirds of professionals (72%) are currently looking or open to looking for a new job – highlighting a critical need for businesses to audit what they are offering their current and future talent. The primary drivers for this job market engagement are financial, with the cost-of-living crisis acting as a significant catalyst.



Address the 'comfort gap': The £11,110.38 gap between current and desired comfortable income is a major source of dissatisfaction and a driver of job mobility. Competitive salaries are no longer just about attracting talent but retaining it.



Targeted retention: Mid-career professionals (25-44) are a high-risk group, demanding the largest pay increases to switch jobs and showing the highest increase in salary progression expectations. Retention strategies must be robust for this segment.



Acknowledge gender disparities: The significant gender pay gap, lower salary satisfaction, and reduced financial flexibility for women are critical issues. Businesses must address these disparities to foster equity and retain female talent.

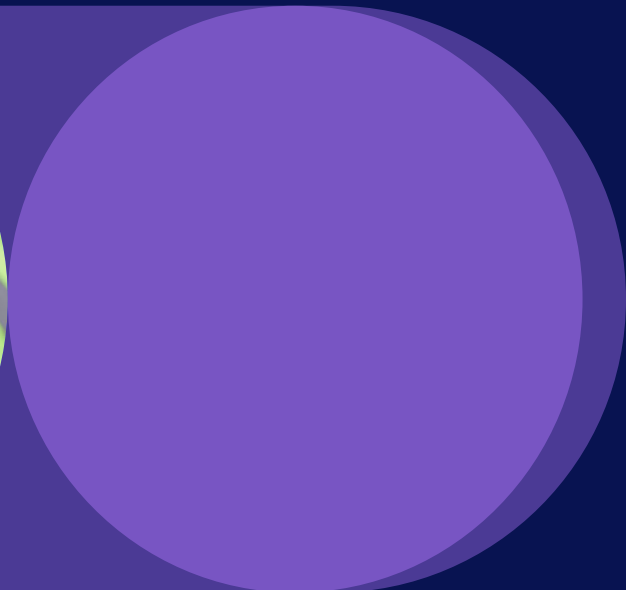


Strategic benefits offerings: While salary is king, benefits can still make a difference. However, businesses should evaluate the relevance and perceived value of their benefits packages. Many employees are willing to sacrifice less-valued benefits for higher pay, suggesting that resources might be better allocated to more impactful perks or direct compensation.



Prioritise financial wellbeing: The struggle to meet financial obligations and save for goals is widespread. Benefits that directly support financial wellbeing (e.g., better pensions, performance bonuses) are likely to be highly valued, especially when employees are willing to trade other perks for them.

The current economic climate has made salary a paramount concern for the majority of the UK workforce. Businesses that fail to recognise and adapt to these heightened financial expectations and disparities risk losing valuable talent in a highly mobile job market.





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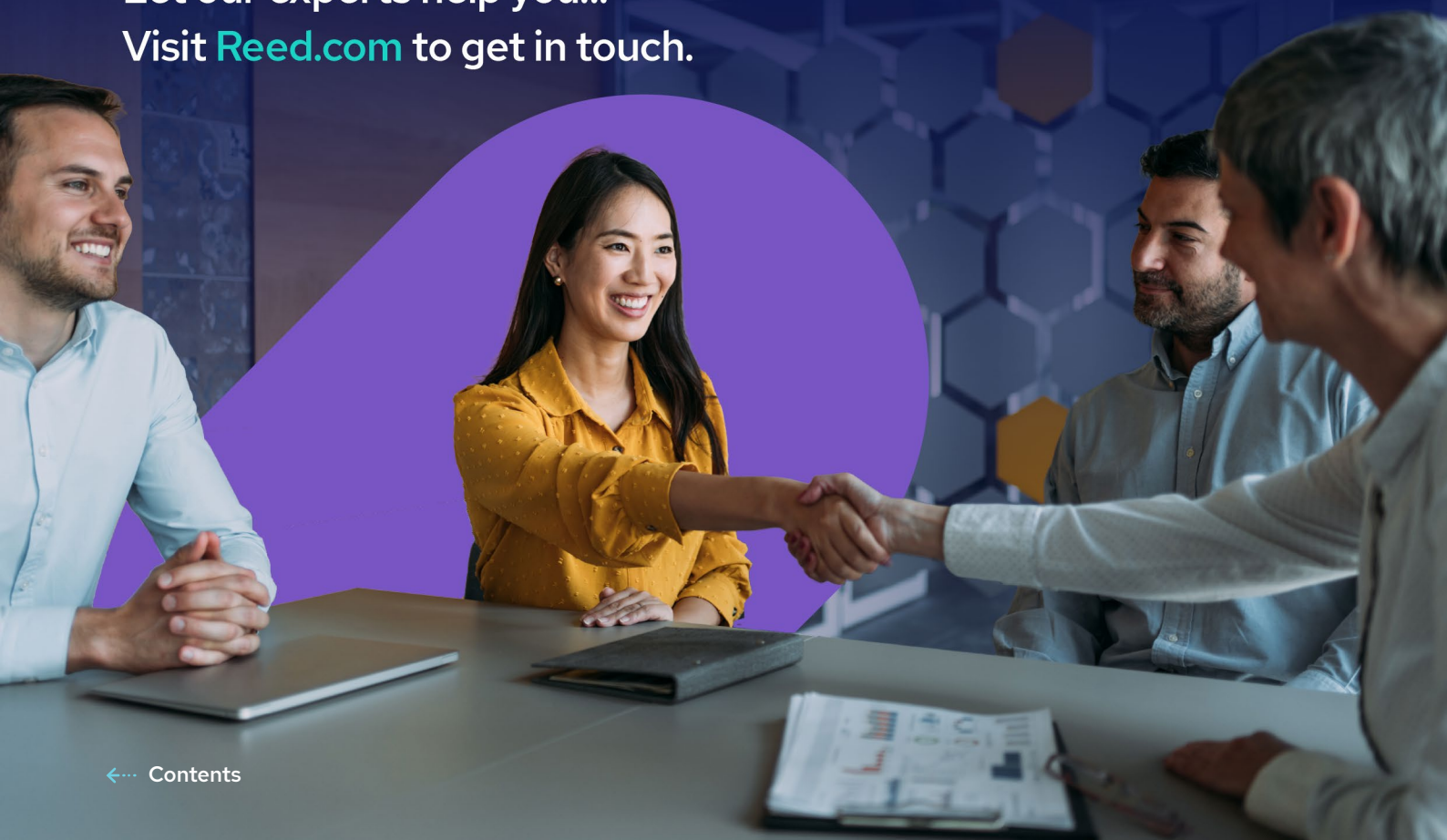


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Role	2026			2025	2024	2027
	Min	Average	Max	Average	Average	Projection
CNC Programmer	£35,100	£38,400 ↗	£41,700	£34,600	£32,900	£40,200
CNC Setter/Operator	£30,900	£33,900 ↗	£36,900	£30,600	£29,300	£35,500
Design Manager	£54,600	£62,000 ↗	£69,400	£61,900	£60,700	£64,900
Electrical/Electronics Design Engineer	£46,700	£53,500 ↗	£60,600	£52,700	£50,400	£56,000
Electronics Engineer	£42,200	£46,800 ↗	£51,400	£46,300	£45,900	£49,000
Engineering Manager	£54,900	£59,500 ↗	£64,100	£55,000	£54,500	£62,300
Engineering/Technical Director	£85,400	£96,500 ↗	£107,600	£91,400	£80,300	£101,100
Field Service Engineer	£35,800	£39,000 ↘	£42,300	£39,500	£36,100	£40,800
Maintenance Manager	£46,600	£49,800 ↗	£53,000	£46,700	£44,200	£52,100
Maintenance Technician	£35,700	£38,500 ↗	£41,300	£37,700	£35,700	£40,300
Manufacturing Engineer	£39,800	£44,600 ↗	£49,400	£44,600	£44,400	£46,700

↗ **11%** increase in CNC Programmer average salaries this year.

↗ **8.2%** increase in Engineering Manager average salaries this year.

Role	2026			2025	2024	2027
	Min	Average	Max	Average	Average	Projection
Mechanical Design Engineer	£44,500	£51,300 ↗	£58,000	£47,500	£45,900	£53,700
Process Engineer	£42,000	£47,000 ↗	£52,000	£46,500	£46,300	£49,200
Production Engineer	£41,900	£45,700 ↗	£49,600	£41,300	£42,700	£47,900
Production Manager	£36,500	£40,900 ↘	£45,300	£42,500	£43,800	£42,800
Programme Manager	£74,800	£80,300 ↘	£85,900	£81,100	£80,000	£84,000
Project Manager	£54,900	£61,500 ↗	£68,100	£57,900	£56,000	£64,400
Quality Engineer	£34,700	£38,100 ↘	£41,500	£43,100	£39,300	£39,800
Quality Inspector	£30,000	£32,700 ↗	£35,500	£31,200	£28,800	£34,200
Quality Manager	£42,800	£47,700 ↗	£52,600	£47,100	£46,500	£49,900
Systems Engineer	£58,900	£65,300 ↗	£71,700	£61,800	£60,500	£68,400

↘ **3.8%** decrease in Production Manager average salaries this year.

↗ **5.7%** increase in Systems Engineer average salaries this year.



2.9%

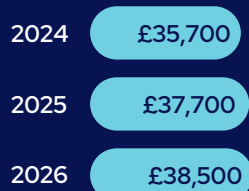
salary growth
versus 2.5% UK
average growth

Roles on the rise

CNC Setter/Operator



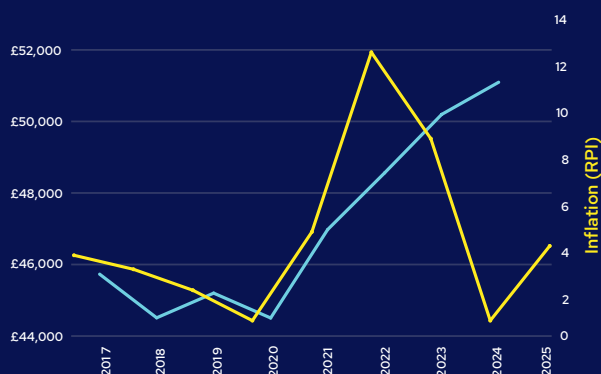
Maintenance Technician



Project Manager



Average salary in region vs UK inflation rate (RPI)



Regional insight

Mel Marjoram

Regional Director, Reed

"The engineering and manufacturing job market remains robust, with continued demand for skilled professionals across a variety of roles in East Anglia. The push towards innovation, sustainability, and automation has shaped hiring trends, particularly in areas like robotics, advanced manufacturing, and renewable energy. Companies are also placing a high value on multidisciplinary skills, with a notable emphasis on data analysis, programming, and problem-solving in addition to core engineering expertise. However, this increased demand has led to skills shortages in some areas, particularly for roles requiring specialised technical knowledge or certifications.

For jobseekers, now is the time to focus on upskilling and broadening expertise to align with industry trends. Professionals proficient in emerging technologies, such as automation and AI, will find themselves in high demand. Certifications in industry standards, such as Six Sigma, and familiarity with CAD software or advanced machinery, can significantly boost employability. Additionally, showcasing soft skills, including adaptability and teamwork, is increasingly important as employers look for professionals who can thrive in collaborative environments.

Employers are facing challenges in attracting and retaining talent amid heightened competition in the region. Offering competitive salaries is essential, but businesses must also focus on crafting compelling benefits packages that go beyond monetary compensation. Flexible working arrangements, professional development opportunities, and clear career progression paths are increasingly valued by engineering and manufacturing professionals. Employers can also benefit from speeding up their recruitment processes, as delays can result in losing top talent to competitors.

For current employees, the key to navigating this evolving landscape is continuous development. Many organisations are investing in training programmes to address skills gaps, and employees should take full advantage of these opportunities. Staying updated on technological advancements and industry best practices can position individuals for long-term success in a sector that remains at the forefront of economic growth and innovation. "

East Midlands



Role	2026			2025	2024	2027
	Min	Average	Max	Average	Average	Projection
CNC Programmer	£33,000	£36,100 ↗	£39,100	£32,500	£31,300	£37,800
CNC Setter/Operator	£29,100	£31,900 ↗	£34,600	£28,700	£27,900	£33,400
Design Manager	£46,800	£52,900 ↘	£59,100	£55,900	£52,600	£55,300
Electrical/Electronics Design Engineer	£40,200	£46,900 ↗	£53,600	£46,500	£45,000	£49,100
Electronics Engineer	£40,700	£44,200 ↗	£47,800	£43,400	£41,800	£46,300
Engineering Manager	£51,200	£55,500 ↗	£59,800	£52,700	£53,000	£58,100
Engineering/Technical Director	£80,400	£90,600 ↗	£100,800	£85,900	£76,300	£94,900
Field Service Engineer	£35,200	£38,500 ↗	£41,700	£38,300	£36,100	£40,300
Maintenance Manager	£46,000	£48,600 ↘	£51,200	£49,700	£46,100	£50,900
Maintenance Technician	£34,500	£40,500 ↗	£46,500	£38,000	£33,900	£42,400
Manufacturing Engineer	£45,700	£49,900 ↗	£54,100	£44,600	£42,800	£52,300

↘ **5.4%** decrease in Design Manager average salaries this year.

↗ **5.5%** increase in Engineering/Technical Director average salaries this year.

Role	2026			2025	2024	2027
	Min	Average	Max	Average	Average	Projection
Mechanical Design Engineer	£40,800	£46,300 ↗	£51,900	£43,600	£42,500	£48,500
Process Engineer	£43,400	£45,500 ↗	£47,700	£44,300	£42,400	£44,000
Production Engineer	£38,100	£42,000 ↗	£45,800	£39,900	£39,400	£41,900
Production Manager	£40,900	£44,400 ↘	£47,800	£45,400	£45,300	£46,400
Programme Manager	£70,400	£75,400 ↘	£80,400	£76,300	£76,100	£78,900
Project Manager	£48,600	£55,600 ↗	£62,500	£53,400	£52,800	£58,200
Quality Engineer	£40,300	£43,900 ↗	£47,400	£38,500	£38,800	£46,000
Quality Inspector	£31,300	£33,000 ↘	£34,700	£33,600	£30,700	£34,500
Quality Manager	£44,700	£48,900 ↗	£53,000	£47,100	£47,800	£51,200
Systems Engineer	£55,500	£61,300 ↗	£67,200	£58,100	£57,500	£64,200

↗ **14%** increase in Quality Engineer average salaries this year.

↗ **3.8%** increase in Quality Manager average salaries this year.



3.5%

salary growth
versus 2.5% UK
average growth

Roles on the rise

CNC Programmer

2024 £31,300

2025 £32,500

2026 £36,100

Engineering/Technical Director

2024 £76,300

2025 £85,900

2026 £90,600

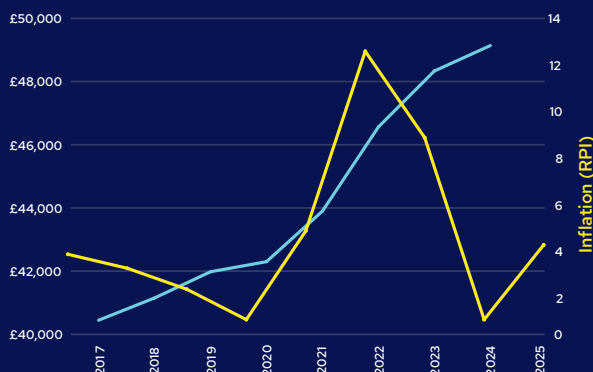
Production Engineer

2024 £39,400

2025 £39,900

2026 £42,000

Average salary in region vs UK inflation rate (RPI)



Regional insight

Chris Willsher

Regional Director, Reed

“ The East Midlands has long been a powerhouse of British industry, and its engineering and manufacturing sectors continue to be a vital part of the region’s economy. As industries evolve, the job market is adapting, presenting both opportunities and challenges for both those looking for work and hiring alike. A closer look reveals a dynamic landscape shaped by specific industry growth, persistent skills gaps, and proactive retention strategies.

Engineering in the East Midlands is seeing a notable increase in activity, particularly within the aerospace and general manufacturing sectors. These areas are generating a high demand for skilled professionals, with a specific need for field service engineers and electrical design specialists. The growth in these fields highlights the region’s diverse industrial base.

Across the broader manufacturing landscape, a significant shift towards automation, robotics, and AI is underway. Supported by government grants and initiatives, businesses are beginning to integrate these advanced technologies into their operations. While many of these are long-term projects, the initial effects are already creating new roles and requiring new skill sets, pointing towards a more technologically advanced future for the region’s manufacturing workforce.

A major challenge facing the East Midlands is a widespread skills shortage. From the production line to highly specialised field service roles, there are simply not enough qualified candidates to meet demand. This makes it increasingly difficult for employers to find individuals with the specific, often niche, skills required for their operations.

In response, many companies are investing heavily in their existing workforce. There is a growing trend of upskilling and retaining current employees through comprehensive training programmes and apprenticeships. Businesses recognise that once they have talented people, it is crucial to keep them. This focus on internal development helps to bridge immediate skills gaps and fosters a loyal, knowledgeable team that understands the unique requirements of the business. However, attracting new talent remains a hurdle, as salary expectations for new hires often clash with the established pay structures for long-serving employees, creating a difficult balancing act for many employers. ”

London



Role	2026			2025	2024	2027
	Min	Average	Max	Average	Average	Projection
CNC Programmer	£44,800	£48,900 ↗	£52,900	£47,400	£46,000	£51,200
CNC Setter/Operator	£39,500	£43,200 ↗	£46,800	£41,900	£40,900	£45,200
Design Manager	£67,800	£76,100 ↗	£84,400	£69,000	£70,800	£79,700
Electrical/Electronics Design Engineer	£52,400	£59,100 ↗	£65,700	£56,900	£55,500	£61,900
Electronics Engineer	£46,900	£50,700 ↘	£54,400	£51,200	£45,500	£53,100
Engineering Manager	£56,100	£62,300 ↘	£68,500	£63,400	£67,400	£65,200
Engineering/Technical Director	£92,800	£104,600 ↗	£116,300	£100,400	£102,200	£109,500
Field Service Engineer	£37,500	£40,700 ↗	£43,800	£39,000	£38,100	£42,600
Maintenance Manager	£51,900	£54,800 ↗	£57,800	£48,900	£49,500	£57,400
Maintenance Technician	£35,900	£37,100 ↗	£38,400	£36,600	£34,600	£38,800
Manufacturing Engineer	£53,000	£57,700 ↘	£62,300	£58,900	£57,500	£60,400

↗ **10.3%** increase in Design Manager average salaries this year.

↘ **1.7%** decrease in Engineering Manager average salaries this year.

Role	2026			2025	2024	2027
	Min	Average	Max	Average	Average	Projection
Mechanical Design Engineer	£48,400	£54,400 ↗	£60,400	£53,400	£49,400	£57,000
Process Engineer	£53,700	£59,800 ↘	£65,900	£63,700	£64,600	£62,500
Production Engineer	£51,400	£56,100 ↗	£60,800	£54,400	£54,000	£58,700
Production Manager	£58,000	£61,900 ↗	£65,900	£57,700	£59,100	£64,800
Programme Manager	£112,700	£119,200 ↗	£125,800	£114,800	£117,100	£124,800
Project Manager	£59,000	£65,200 ↘	£71,500	£69,400	£67,800	£68,200
Quality Engineer	£45,300	£51,600 ↘	£57,900	£53,700	£59,100	£53,900
Quality Inspector	£38,300	£41,600 ↘	£45,000	£42,700	£40,100	£43,500
Quality Manager	£49,800	£55,200 ↗	£60,500	£53,700	£60,800	£57,700
Systems Engineer	£62,900	£70,800 ↘	£78,700	£75,900	£63,100	£74,100

↗ **3.8%** increase in Programme Manager average salaries this year.

↗ **2.8%** increase in Quality Manager average salaries this year.



1.3%

salary growth
versus 2.5% UK
average growth

Roles on the rise

Electrical/Electronics Design Engineer

2024	£55,500
2025	£56,900
2026	£59,100

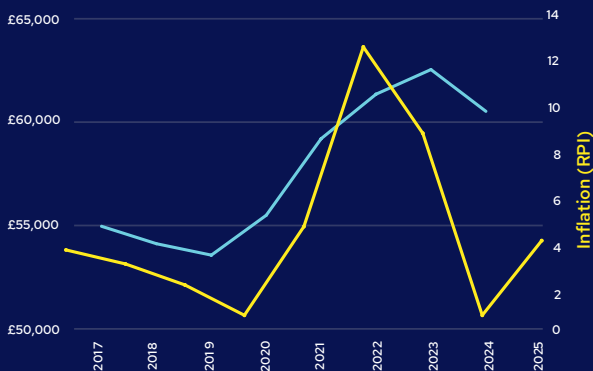
Maintenance Technician

2024	£34,600
2025	£36,600
2026	£37,100

Mechanical Design Engineer

2024	£49,400
2025	£53,400
2026	£54,400

Average salary in region vs UK inflation rate (RPI)



Regional insight

Kimberly Hunsdon
Regional Manager, Reed

“ The engineering and manufacturing market in London remains remarkably busy, with consistent demand for skilled professionals. This activity is significantly bolstered by major regional infrastructure developments, which continue to stimulate job creation and attract investment. However, the capital’s unique economic landscape presents a distinct set of challenges and opportunities for both employers and professionals.

A key driver of growth is the ongoing expansion of projects like the DP World London Gateway Port. As this major logistics hub grows, it creates a powerful ripple effect across the supply chain. Manufacturing and distribution companies are increasingly establishing themselves nearby to reduce transport costs and improve efficiency. This concentration of industry fuels a steady demand for engineering talent, from design and production to maintenance and logistics, ensuring the region remains a hotspot for opportunities.

Despite the high demand, London faces a significant challenge regarding salary competitiveness. Over the past few years, engineering salaries in the capital have not kept pace with those in other parts of the UK. This disparity makes it difficult to attract talent from outside the M25. Professionals from other cities have little financial incentive to relocate when they can achieve a better standard of living for the same, or even more, money elsewhere. As a result, employers are heavily reliant on the local talent pool. A notable portion of this pool consists of international professionals who have relocated to the area. While these individuals provide a vital source of skilled labour, the overall talent shortage remains acute, forcing employers to be more creative with their benefits to attract and retain the employees they need. ”

North East



Role	2026			2025	2024	2027
	Min	Average	Max	Average	Average	Projection
CNC Programmer	£34,300	£36,500 ↗	£38,800	£33,800	£30,700	£38,200
CNC Setter/Operator	£30,200	£32,300 ↗	£34,400	£29,800	£27,300	£33,800
Design Manager	£52,600	£58,900 ↗	£65,200	£56,800	£54,800	£61,700
Electrical/Electronics Design Engineer	£45,800	£50,100 ↗	£54,400	£46,600	£44,500	£52,500
Electronics Engineer	£39,400	£44,100 ↘	£48,800	£46,600	£43,100	£46,100
Engineering Manager	£54,300	£57,300 ↗	£60,400	£56,600	£49,900	£60,000
Engineering/Technical Director	£83,400	£91,800 ↗	£100,100	£89,200	£74,800	£96,200
Field Service Engineer	£36,200	£39,000 ↗	£41,700	£37,800	£34,100	£40,800
Maintenance Manager	£46,400	£48,300 ↘	£50,200	£50,400	£45,200	£50,600
Maintenance Technician	£42,200	£43,600 ↗	£45,000	£41,200	£40,100	£45,700
Manufacturing Engineer	£41,600	£44,400 ↘	£47,100	£47,600	£41,800	£46,500

↗ **3.2%** increase in Field Service Engineer average salaries this year.

↘ **6.7%** decrease in Manufacturing Engineer average salaries this year.

Role	2026			2025	2024	2027
	Min	Average	Max	Average	Average	Projection
Mechanical Design Engineer	£44,100	£48,900 ↗	£53,600	£45,800	£43,600	£51,200
Process Engineer	£41,100	£44,700 ↘	£48,400	£45,400	£43,100	£46,800
Production Engineer	£40,000	£42,000 ↗	£44,000	£41,700	£45,300	£43,900
Production Manager	£40,600	£43,300 ↘	£46,100	£43,400	£39,800	£45,300
Programme Manager	£73,100	£76,400 ↘	£79,900	£79,200	£74,600	£79,900
Project Manager	£52,600	£59,100 ↗	£65,700	£57,000	£54,600	£61,900
Quality Engineer	£40,800	£44,100 ↘	£47,400	£47,000	£40,600	£46,200
Quality Inspector	£29,300	£31,100 ↗	£33,000	£30,400	£26,800	£32,600
Quality Manager	£44,200	£47,500 ↗	£50,800	£45,900	£44,400	£49,700
Systems Engineer	£57,600	£62,200 ↗	£66,800	£60,300	£56,400	£65,100

↗ **0.7%** increase in Production Engineer average salaries this year.

↗ **3.2%** increase in Systems Engineer average salaries this year.



1.2%

salary growth
versus 2.5% UK
average growth

Roles on the rise

Engineering Manager

2024	£49,900
2025	£56,600
2026	£57,300

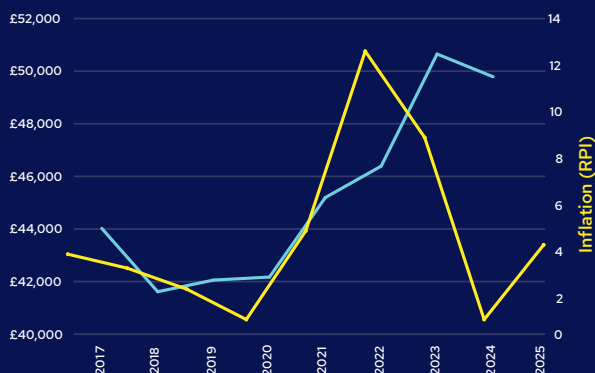
Maintenance Technician

2024	£40,100
2025	£41,200
2026	£43,600

Project Manager

2024	£54,600
2025	£57,000
2026	£59,100

Average salary in region vs UK inflation rate (RPI)



Regional insight

Charlotte Rickwood
Regional Manager, Reed

“ The strength of the engineering sector in the North East is a testament to the region’s industrial heritage and its capacity for innovation. Facing national economic pressures and persistent skills shortages, businesses are demonstrating remarkable resilience. Instead of being overshadowed by challenges, the industry is actively reshaping its future through strategic workforce development and a pivot towards more holistic talent attraction strategies.

One of the most significant challenges remains the scarcity of specific skill sets. The demand for skilled CNC machinists continues to outpace supply, with qualified professionals being secured very quickly. This gap is compounded by a generational shift, as fewer young people are entering traditional hands-on engineering roles like manual machining. At the same time, the electronics field is experiencing a surge, driven by advancements from PCB assembly to the growing electric vehicle battery market, creating new pockets of high demand.

In response, employers are adopting more flexible and creative approaches to hiring. While strong salaries are still a factor, there’s a growing recognition that bidding wars are not always sustainable. Companies are instead enhancing their offers with benefits that improve work-life balance.

Contract and project-based work is also on the rise. When headcount for permanent roles is frozen, bringing in specialists for specific projects allows companies to access vital skills without long-term commitment. This is particularly useful for new production line installations or major maintenance tasks, ensuring daily operations can continue without disruption.

Looking ahead, the drive towards net zero and the expansion of the green energy sector present a major opportunity for the North East. This transition will define the industry’s future, but it also presents a significant skills challenge that must be addressed. Alongside this, there is a conscious effort to improve diversity, with many companies actively seeking to hire more women and professionals from ethnic minority backgrounds, recognising the immense value a diverse workforce brings. ”

North West



Role	2026			2025	2024	2027
	Min	Average	Max	Average	Average	Projection
CNC Programmer	£36,500	£39,600 ↗	£42,800	£36,700	£35,100	£41,500
CNC Setter/Operator	£32,100	£35,000 ↗	£37,900	£32,500	£31,300	£36,700
Design Manager	£57,200	£66,900 ↗	£76,500	£57,300	£59,900	£70,100
Electrical/Electronics Design Engineer	£49,400	£55,000 ↗	£60,600	£49,300	£50,800	£57,600
Electronics Engineer	£43,700	£48,200 ↗	£52,600	£45,100	£43,900	£50,500
Engineering Manager	£58,100	£62,400 ↗	£66,800	£57,500	£55,900	£65,400
Engineering/Technical Director	£90,500	£99,100 ↗	£107,800	£81,000	£79,300	£103,900
Field Service Engineer	£35,700	£39,000 ↗	£42,400	£37,600	£36,100	£40,800
Maintenance Manager	£48,700	£51,700 ↗	£54,600	£51,000	£47,100	£54,100
Maintenance Technician	£37,400	£40,000 ↗	£42,500	£37,400	£36,900	£41,900
Manufacturing Engineer	£45,300	£48,600 ↗	£51,800	£48,300	£47,100	£50,900

↗ **16.8%** increase in Design Manager average salaries this year.

↗ **6.9%** increase in Electronics Engineer average salaries this year.

Role	2026			2025	2024	2027
	Min	Average	Max	Average	Average	Projection
Mechanical Design Engineer	£43,500	£47,800 ↗	£52,100	£47,600	£45,000	£50,000
Process Engineer	£41,600	£51,600 ↘	£61,600	£55,200	£53,900	£54,000
Production Engineer	£49,600	£52,400 ↗	£55,200	£50,200	£42,300	£54,900
Production Manager	£42,800	£46,700 ↗	£50,600	£43,600	£43,900	£48,900
Programme Manager	£77,800	£82,900 ↘	£88,100	£86,200	£85,300	£86,700
Project Manager	£53,900	£58,800 ↔	£63,700	£58,800	£58,200	£61,500
Quality Engineer	£43,000	£46,300 ↗	£49,600	£43,700	£38,800	£48,500
Quality Inspector	£31,200	£33,800 ↗	£36,400	£33,100	£30,600	£35,400
Quality Manager	£46,400	£50,400 ↗	£54,500	£49,600	£48,500	£52,800
Systems Engineer	£61,300	£67,400 ↗	£73,600	£65,600	£64,400	£70,500

↘ **6.5%** decrease in Process Engineer average salaries this year.

↗ **2.1%** increase in Quality Inspector average salaries this year.



5%

salary growth
versus 2.5% UK
average growth

Roles on the rise

Electronics Engineer

2024	£43,900
2025	£45,100
2026	£48,200

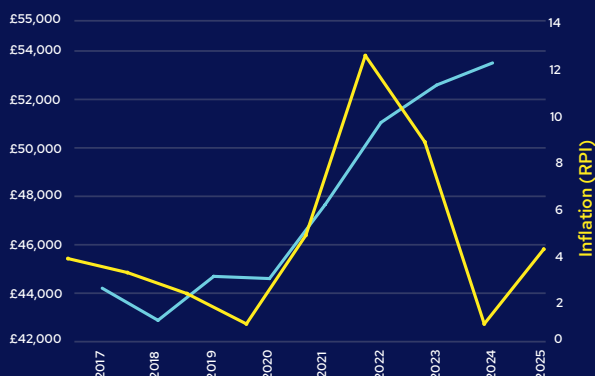
Maintenance Technician

2024	£36,900
2025	£37,400
2026	£40,000

Production Engineer

2024	£42,300
2025	£50,200
2026	£52,400

Average salary in region vs UK inflation rate (RPI)



Regional insight

Douglas Turkington
Regional Director, Reed

“ Economic and political uncertainty, stemming from global events and domestic policies, remains a primary concern for many businesses in the North West. These external pressures often overshadow the long-standing issue of candidate shortages, which companies have come to view as a persistent operational reality.

One of the most pressing skills gaps is the scarcity of professionals with manual machining expertise. As technology advances and younger generations gravitate towards design or CNC-based roles, traditional hands-on engineering skills are becoming a dying breed. In contrast, the demand for skilled CNC machinists is exceptionally high, and those with these abilities are snapped up quickly. We’re also seeing a notable surge in the electronics field, driven by everything from PCB assembly to the development of batteries for electric vehicles.

In response to these dynamics, hiring strategies are evolving. Many organisations are turning to project-based and contract hiring to secure niche skills for specific timelines, with project engineers being particularly sought after for temporary roles. While employers still prefer to hire experienced professionals, some are more willing to upskill junior applicants who are open to learning.

When it comes to attracting talent, flexibility is key. Employers are showing more willingness to negotiate salaries, often considering uplifts of around £5,000 to secure the right person. Beyond pay, innovative benefits are making a difference. Some companies have adopted a four-day workweek, finding it a powerful tool to attract talent without increasing salary costs.

Looking ahead, two major themes will define the sector’s future: green energy and diversity. The national push towards net zero and the expansion of the green energy workforce present both a huge opportunity and a significant skills challenge. Simultaneously, there is a conscious effort within the industry to address its diversity deficit. Many companies are now actively seeking to hire more women engineers and professionals from ethnic minority backgrounds, recognising the value a diverse workforce brings. Individuals from these groups may find themselves in a strong position in the current market. //

Northern Ireland



Role	2026			2025	2024	2027
	Min	Average	Max	Average	Average	Projection
CNC Programmer	£30,400	£33,100 ↗	£35,800	£30,900	£26,600	£34,700
CNC Setter/Operator	£26,800	£29,200 ↗	£31,700	£27,300	£23,700	£30,600
Design Manager	£46,700	£53,400 ↗	£60,100	£52,000	£47,500	£55,900
Electrical/Electronics Design Engineer	£40,700	£45,400 ↗	£50,200	£42,700	£38,500	£47,600
Electronics Engineer	£36,500	£40,100 ↗	£43,700	£39,400	£34,400	£42,000
Engineering Manager	£45,600	£50,000 ↗	£54,300	£49,200	£43,300	£52,400
Engineering/Technical Director	£74,100	£83,200 ↗	£92,200	£81,600	£64,800	£87,200
Field Service Engineer	£30,300	£32,900 ↗	£35,500	£32,200	£27,600	£34,500
Maintenance Manager	£40,400	£42,900 ↗	£45,400	£41,700	£36,700	£44,900
Maintenance Technician	£30,500	£33,000 ↗	£35,500	£32,200	£27,800	£34,600
Manufacturing Engineer	£36,000	£39,100 ↗	£42,100	£38,400	£33,300	£40,900

↗ **7%** increase in CNC Setter/Operator average salaries this year.

↗ **2.9%** increase in Maintenance Manager average salaries this year.

Role	2026			2025	2024	2027
	Min	Average	Max	Average	Average	Projection
Mechanical Design Engineer	£36,900	£41,200 ↗	£45,500	£40,400	£34,900	£43,100
Process Engineer	£36,500	£40,500 ↘	£44,600	£41,500	£37,400	£42,400
Production Engineer	£34,900	£38,000 ↗	£41,200	£35,400	£31,200	£39,800
Production Manager	£36,000	£39,300 ↘	£42,500	£39,700	£34,500	£41,100
Programme Manager	£64,900	£69,300 ↘	£73,600	£72,500	£64,600	£72,500
Project Manager	£46,300	£51,200 ↗	£56,100	£51,100	£45,400	£53,600
Quality Engineer	£33,700	£36,400 ↗	£39,100	£35,500	£30,600	£38,100
Quality Inspector	£26,000	£28,200 ↗	£30,400	£27,900	£23,200	£29,500
Quality Manager	£39,300	£43,000 ↗	£46,800	£42,000	£38,500	£45,000
Systems Engineer	£51,100	£56,300 ↗	£61,500	£55,200	£48,800	£59,000

↗ **2%** increase in Mechanical Design Engineer average salaries this year.

↘ **4.4%** decrease in Programme Manager average salaries this year.



1.8%

salary growth
versus 2.5% UK
average growth

Roles on the rise

Electrical/Electronics Design Engineer

2024	£38,500
2025	£42,700
2026	£45,400

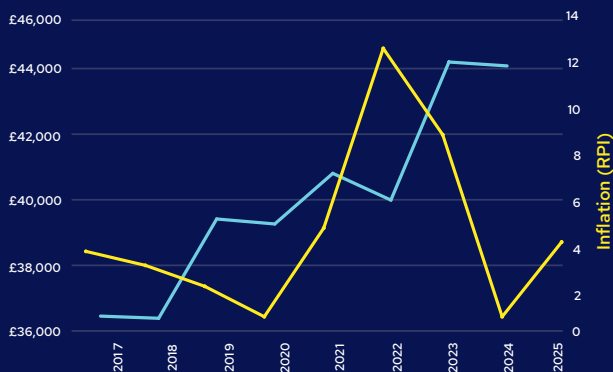
Maintenance Manager

2024	£36,700
2025	£41,700
2026	£42,900

Quality Engineer

2024	£30,600
2025	£35,500
2026	£36,400

Average salary in region vs UK inflation rate (RPI)



Regional insight

Paula Gallagher
Regional Director, Reed

" The engineering sector in Northern Ireland remains a cornerstone of the economy, driven predominantly by robust manufacturing and distribution industries. As we look towards 2026, the landscape is defined by a persistent and challenging candidate shortage. This scarcity of skilled professionals is forcing employers to rethink their recruitment strategies and adapt to a market where niche expertise is both highly sought after and difficult to find.

A significant trend is the high demand for engineers with specialised skill sets, particularly within electrical and mechanical disciplines. Companies involved in servicing, supplying, and maintaining industrial equipment are frequently searching for individuals who possess a unique combination of qualifications. For example, a role might require someone to have a strong electrical background while also understanding the specific mechanical workings of industrial machinery, such as power washers or plant equipment. This need for dual expertise creates a very small talent pool, making recruitment a significant hurdle.

This challenge is amplified by the fact that many engineering roles require a deep, pre-existing knowledge of specific products or systems. Employers are often not in a position to train individuals from the ground up, instead seeking professionals who can integrate seamlessly into their operations. This 'plug-and-play' expectation puts immense pressure on the available talent, leading to a highly competitive environment where skilled engineers are in a strong negotiating position.





Consequently, the engineering market is overwhelmingly candidate-led. Finding the right person is rarely a quick process, and companies that are too rigid in their requirements or compensation packages risk losing out. Success in this climate depends on an employer's willingness to be flexible, whether that means adjusting salary expectations, offering attractive benefits, or being open to hiring people with transferable skills. //

Does your salary and benefits package help you attract and retain critical talent?

With access to data from over 18 million jobs and market-leading talent analytics tools, our talent advisory team helps you assess your rewards against data insights and real-time salary and benefits expectations for any role, in any sector.

We go beyond just benchmarking, ensuring your reward proposition supports your organisational strategy. Our salary benchmarking services provide comprehensive support to build a reward structure that attracts, retains, and motivates employees.

We deliver:

-  Bespoke salary benchmarking reports tailored to your roles and sectors, helping with critical talent planning.
-  Salary and benefits analysis to uncover gaps and opportunities, futureproof your structures, and inform future organisational design.
-  Analysis of reward challenges to understand and address attraction and retention barrier.
-  Tailored recommendations and implementation support to strengthen your strategy.

Make sure your reward structure is fit for the future.

 [Find out more about our benchmarking services here](#)



Scotland



Role	2026			2025	2024	2027
	Min	Average	Max	Average	Average	Projection
CNC Programmer	£34,400	£38,100 ↗	£41,900	£34,800	£32,800	£39,900
CNC Setter/Operator	£30,300	£33,700 ↗	£37,100	£30,700	£29,200	£35,300
Design Manager	£52,700	£61,500 ↗	£70,300	£58,500	£58,500	£64,400
Electrical/Electronics Design Engineer	£50,800	£57,100 ↗	£63,400	£50,000	£47,700	£59,800
Electronics Engineer	£42,700	£46,500 ↗	£50,300	£45,000	£44,100	£48,700
Engineering Manager	£49,200	£54,900 ↘	£60,600	£58,700	£52,500	£57,400
Engineering/Technical Director	£83,700	£95,800 ↗	£107,900	£91,900	£79,900	£100,400
Field Service Engineer	£35,400	£38,400 ↗	£41,500	£38,000	£34,300	£40,200
Maintenance Manager	£45,700	£49,500 ↗	£53,200	£46,900	£44,000	£51,800
Maintenance Technician	£33,600	£36,500 ↗	£39,500	£35,900	£31,800	£38,200
Manufacturing Engineer	£40,700	£45,000 ↗	£49,300	£43,200	£41,000	£47,100

↗ **4.2%** increase in **Engineering/Technical Director** average salaries this year.

↗ **5.5%** increase in **Maintenance Manager** average salaries this year.

Role	2026			2025	2024	2027
	Min	Average	Max	Average	Average	Projection
Mechanical Design Engineer	£43,200	£49,100 ↗	£55,100	£45,700	£44,900	£51,400
Process Engineer	£41,200	£46,700 ↘	£52,200	£46,800	£46,100	£48,900
Production Engineer	£39,400	£43,800 ↗	£48,200	£39,900	£38,500	£45,900
Production Manager	£38,400	£41,300 ↘	£44,100	£44,200	£39,700	£43,200
Programme Manager	£73,300	£79,800 ↘	£86,200	£81,600	£79,700	£83,500
Project Manager	£47,600	£58,900 ↘	£70,100	£60,400	£56,200	£61,600
Quality Engineer	£42,900	£46,000 ↗	£49,000	£39,000	£43,900	£48,200
Quality Inspector	£29,400	£32,500 ↗	£35,600	£31,400	£28,600	£34,000
Quality Manager	£49,200	£52,400 ↘	£55,600	£54,800	£47,300	£57,600
Systems Engineer	£57,800	£64,900 ↗	£72,000	£62,100	£60,200	£67,900

↘ **2.2%** decrease in **Programme Manager** average salaries this year.

↗ **4.5%** increase in **Systems Engineer** average salaries this year.



3.1%

salary growth
versus 2.5% UK
average growth

Roles on the rise

Electronics Engineer

2024	£44,100
2025	£45,000
2026	£46,500

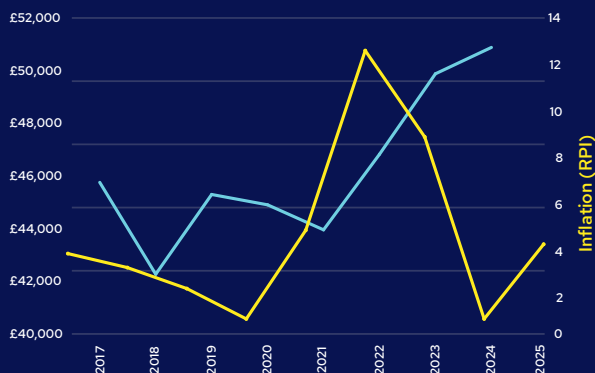
Field Service Engineer

2024	£34,300
2025	£38,000
2026	£38,400

Manufacturing Engineer

2024	£41,000
2025	£43,200
2026	£45,000

Average salary in region vs UK inflation rate (RPI)



Regional insight

Gillian Dolan
Regional Director, Reed

"The oil and gas industry, long considered the bedrock of engineering in regions like Aberdeen, is currently experiencing turbulence. High taxes and specific levies have created uncertainty, particularly for companies focused solely on the North Sea. Many satellite offices of large international firms are scaling back their UK operations in response.

However, the outlook is not entirely bleak. Scottish-rooted engineering firms that serve a global client base continue to thrive. These businesses, often small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), leverage their local expertise to support projects across the globe. They represent a key area of stability and growth, providing competitive salaries and opportunities for skilled professionals.

All eyes are on the renewables sector to fill the gap left by a contracting North Sea oil and gas market. The transition to green energy, particularly wind power, is expected to create a huge demand for engineers. It's estimated that hundreds of thousands of new engineers will be needed globally by 2030 to service this expansion. The challenge lies in managing a gradual and effective shift, using the immense expertise within the existing oil and gas workforce to support the renewables sector. This transition cannot happen overnight - it requires a harmonious collaboration between the old and the new.

Beyond energy, Scotland boasts a large manufacturing sector, especially in food and drink. While these roles often involve unpopular shift work, they are in high demand and offer competitive financial rewards. Attracting and retaining talent in this area remains a key challenge for employers.

The primary challenge for employers in the coming year will be navigating a candidate-rich market resulting from redundancies in the oil and gas supply chain. While some international talent has relocated, a substantial skilled workforce remains in Scotland. The key will be to bridge the skills gap between traditional oil and gas roles and the needs of the growing renewables and manufacturing sectors. Successfully transitioning this talent will be the silver bullet for Scotland's engineering future. "

South East



Role	2026			2025	2024	2027
	Min	Average	Max	Average	Average	Projection
CNC Programmer	£35,900	£39,700 ↗	£43,500	£37,600	£35,700	£41,600
CNC Setter/Operator	£31,700	£35,100 ↗	£38,600	£32,800	£32,300	£36,800
Design Manager	£54,800	£63,000 ↗	£71,100	£61,100	£62,400	£65,900
Electrical/Electronics Design Engineer	£54,000	£59,100 ↗	£64,200	£52,400	£53,300	£61,900
Electronics Engineer	£43,500	£48,100 ↗	£52,700	£46,900	£46,400	£50,300
Engineering Manager	£54,600	£60,500 ↗	£66,400	£59,000	£57,000	£63,300
Engineering/Technical Director	£82,500	£96,200 ↘	£109,900	£97,200	£87,800	£100,700
Field Service Engineer	£35,600	£38,700 ↗	£41,800	£37,900	£35,900	£40,500
Maintenance Manager	£47,200	£50,200 ↘	£53,200	£51,200	£46,700	£52,600
Maintenance Technician	£35,300	£37,800 ↗	£40,400	£37,100	£35,600	£39,600
Manufacturing Engineer	£41,600	£45,400 ↗	£49,300	£45,000	£43,000	£47,500

↗ **5.6%** increase in CNC Programmer average salaries this year.

↗ **12.8%** increase in Electrical/Electronics Design Engineer average salaries this year.

Role	2026			2025	2024	2027
	Min	Average	Max	Average	Average	Projection
Mechanical Design Engineer	£45,700	£50,700 ↗	£55,800	£50,000	£47,100	£53,100
Process Engineer	£41,900	£46,600 ↗	£51,200	£46,300	£49,300	£48,700
Production Engineer	£40,800	£44,300 ↗	£47,800	£40,700	£39,800	£46,400
Production Manager	£42,400	£46,800 ↘	£51,300	£47,500	£45,200	£49,000
Programme Manager	£79,900	£85,200 ↗	£90,500	£81,700	£79,200	£89,200
Project Manager	£55,000	£60,200 ↗	£65,500	£59,700	£60,300	£63,000
Quality Engineer	£40,600	£44,000 ↗	£47,300	£42,500	£40,800	£46,100
Quality Inspector	£30,200	£33,000 ↗	£35,800	£32,600	£32,000	£34,500
Quality Manager	£63,300	£69,800 ↗	£56,400	£51,000	£51,000	£53,700
Systems Engineer	£56,500	£64,000 ↗	£76,300	£64,000	£60,400	£73,100

↘ **1.5%** decrease in Production Manager average salaries this year.

↗ **9.1%** increase in Systems Engineer average salaries this year.



2.8%

salary growth
versus 2.5% UK
average growth

Roles on the rise

Electronics Engineer

2024	£46,400
2025	£46,900
2026	£48,100

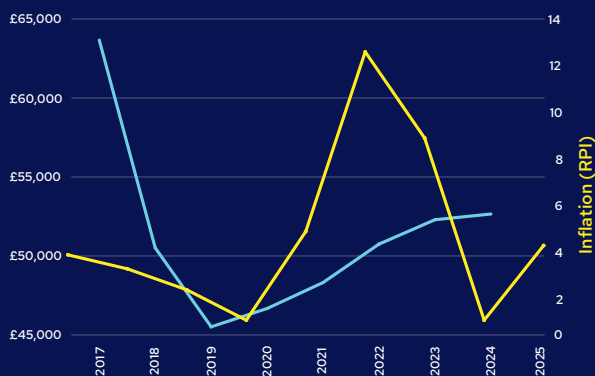
Field Service Engineer

2024	£35,900
2025	£37,900
2026	£38,700

Manufacturing Engineer

2024	£43,000
2025	£45,000
2026	£45,400

Average salary in region vs UK inflation rate (RPI)



Regional insight

Grant Rigler
Regional Director, Reed

“ The engineering and manufacturing sectors in the South East present a complex picture for 2026. While the job market remains busy, particularly for maintenance engineers in production and manufacturing environments, a growing disconnect between employer expectations and jobseeker realities is creating significant challenges.

Job flow is not an issue; there is a steady stream of roles for maintenance engineers, engineering managers, and maintenance managers. These professionals are crucial for keeping 24-hour production facilities operational through preventative and responsive maintenance. However, despite the high number of vacancies, filling them is proving difficult.

The core problem is a talent shortage compounded by low employee mobility. Many skilled engineers are hesitant to move roles. The cost-of-living crisis means that salary is now the primary motivator, overshadowing benefits like private healthcare that were once major attractions. Those who do move need a substantial pay increase, estimated at around 10%, to justify the risk and disruption of changing jobs. With many companies offering stagnant salaries, engineers see little point in moving from one factory to another for the same pay unless it involves a significant lifestyle improvement, such as switching from shift work to a days-only schedule.

Employers are facing their own financial pressures. Increased operational costs mean they are less flexible than they were a few years ago. Previously, a company might have hired someone who met 70% of the job criteria, intending to provide training for the rest. Now, they are holding out for the ‘perfect’ person who can meet 100% of the requirements from day one. This rigidity, combined with salaries that have not kept pace with inflation, has created a standoff.

While the demand for skilled engineers is strong, the reluctance of companies to increase salaries to competitive levels is stifling movement within the market. Until salaries align more closely with the expectations of engineering and manufacturing professionals and the rising cost of living, this recruitment challenge is likely to persist throughout 2026. ”



Role	2026			2025	2024	2027
	Min	Average	Max	Average	Average	Projection
CNC Programmer	£36,200	£39,200 ↗	£42,200	£36,800	£35,800	£41,000
CNC Setter/Operator	£32,900	£35,600 ↗	£38,400	£32,100	£31,800	£37,300
Design Manager	£53,600	£60,300 ↘	£66,900	£65,300	£67,100	£63,000
Electrical/Electronics Design Engineer	£47,700	£53,000 ↗	£58,300	£51,900	£51,400	£55,500
Electronics Engineer	£40,900	£45,400 ↘	£49,900	£47,900	£45,400	£47,500
Engineering Manager	£53,100	£58,300 ↗	£63,500	£57,300	£54,900	£61,000
Engineering/Technical Director	£91,400	£99,300 ↗	£107,100	£86,600	£75,600	£104,100
Field Service Engineer	£35,400	£38,100 ↗	£40,700	£36,300	£34,800	£39,900
Maintenance Manager	£46,500	£51,100 ↗	£41,200	£44,600	£41,000	£53,500
Maintenance Technician	£32,800	£37,000 ↗	£48,200	£35,200	£33,500	£38,700
Manufacturing Engineer	£40,800	£44,500 ↗	£54,000	£43,400	£41,900	£46,600

↘ **7.7%** decrease in Design Manager average salaries this year.

↗ **14.7%** increase in Engineering/Technical Director average salaries this year.

Role	2026			2025	2024	2027
	Min	Average	Max	Average	Average	Projection
Mechanical Design Engineer	£43,700	£48,900 ↘	£54,000	£49,100	£46,700	£51,200
Process Engineer	£35,600	£38,900 ↘	£42,200	£43,500	£43,200	£40,700
Production Engineer	£41,300	£45,200 ↗	£49,100	£41,900	£38,000	£47,400
Production Manager	£42,800	£46,500 ↘	£50,200	£47,300	£46,400	£48,700
Programme Manager	£77,100	£82,000 ↘	£86,900	£86,300	£87,000	£85,800
Project Manager	£58,400	£63,600 ↗	£68,900	£56,500	£56,800	£66,600
Quality Engineer	£38,000	£42,200 ↗	£46,500	£40,300	£39,700	£44,200
Quality Inspector	£29,900	£35,000 ↗	£40,100	£34,100	£31,200	£36,600
Quality Manager	£47,000	£52,600 ↗	£58,200	£47,700	£52,200	£55,100
Systems Engineer	£60,800	£66,700 ↗	£72,600	£65,700	£65,800	£69,800

↗ **7.9%** increase in Production Engineer average salaries this year.

↗ **12.6%** increase in Project Manager average salaries this year.



3.1%

salary growth
versus 2.5% UK
average growth

Roles on the rise

Engineering Manager

2024	£54,900
2025	£57,300
2026	£58,300

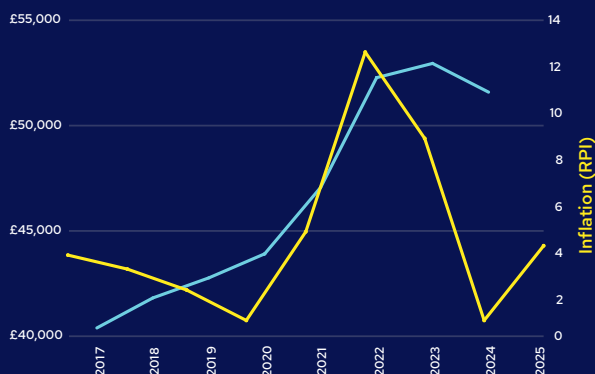
Maintenance Technician

2024	£33,500
2025	£35,200
2026	£37,000

Quality Inspector

2024	£31,200
2025	£34,100
2026	£35,000

Average salary in region vs UK inflation rate (RPI)



Regional insight

Katie Cartner

Regional Director, Reed

" The engineering and manufacturing sector in the South West continues to evolve, shaped by significant projects, changing workforce dynamics, and advances in sustainable technology. Throughout 2025, the market demonstrated resilience, but also caution, as some firms took a measured approach to hiring in the face of economic headwinds. Despite this, core drivers are creating a thriving and competitive landscape for employers and professionals alike.

The region is experiencing the ongoing influence of large-scale projects, most notably Hinkley Point Power Station and the highly anticipated battery gigafactory in Somerset. These initiatives are driving robust demand for skilled engineers and technical specialists, pushing salaries upward and increasing competition for experienced professionals. Maintenance engineering, in particular, stands out as a growth area, with employers needing to offer attractive compensation packages to secure and retain talent. For smaller businesses, this heightened competition poses a challenge, intensifying the need for proactive talent strategies.

Addressing the skills shortage remains a core priority. Many organisations are investing in structured trainee schemes, graduate programmes, and clear professional development pathways to ensure a steady influx of new talent as experienced professionals reach retirement. The proactive cultivation of emerging skill sets is helping to futureproof the sector and address the shifting demands of a dynamic market.

Innovation is taking centre stage, especially around the Bristol and Bath Science Park, where a cluster of startups and research-driven companies are advancing work in green energy, composite materials, and sustainable manufacturing. This commitment to low-carbon technologies is not only broadening career opportunities but also aligning the sector with wider environmental objectives.

Employers aiming to lead in this evolving market should balance competitive salaries with meaningful career development opportunities and support for upskilling. As employees in 2026 become ever more motivated by progression and learning, these strategies will be critical to attracting and retaining the talent needed to drive growth and innovation across the South West's engineering and manufacturing landscape. //

Wales



Role	2026			2025	2024	2027
	Min	Average	Max	Average	Average	Projection
CNC Programmer	£33,900	£36,800 ↗	£39,600	£32,700	£30,600	£38,600
CNC Setter/Operator	£29,900	£32,500 ↗	£35,100	£28,900	£27,200	£34,100
Design Manager	£52,000	£59,300 ↗	£66,600	£55,100	£54,600	£62,100
Electrical/Electronics Design Engineer	£42,300	£47,800 ↗	£53,200	£44,500	£42,900	£50,100
Electronics Engineer	£45,500	£48,700 ↗	£52,000	£42,700	£42,600	£51,000
Engineering Manager	£54,600	£58,900 ↗	£63,300	£55,300	£50,100	£61,700
Engineering/Technical Director	£82,600	£92,400 ↗	£102,100	£86,500	£74,600	£96,800
Field Service Engineer	£35,200	£38,100 ↗	£41,100	£35,700	£35,500	£39,900
Maintenance Manager	£43,100	£48,600 ↗	£54,000	£48,500	£44,400	£50,900
Maintenance Technician	£33,900	£36,600 ↗	£39,300	£34,200	£32,000	£38,300
Manufacturing Engineer	£41,800	£44,300 ↘	£46,900	£45,900	£44,500	£46,300

↗ **6.5%** increase in **Engineering Manager** average salaries this year.

↗ **7%** increase in **Maintenance Technician** average salaries this year.

Role	2026			2025	2024	2027
	Min	Average	Max	Average	Average	Projection
Mechanical Design Engineer	£40,000	£45,200 ↗	£50,400	£43,200	£40,300	£47,300
Process Engineer	£42,700	£46,500 ↗	£50,200	£45,200	£42,300	£48,700
Production Engineer	£38,900	£42,200 ↗	£45,600	£37,600	£35,900	£44,200
Production Manager	£41,000	£46,800 ↗	£52,700	£44,500	£38,200	£49,000
Programme Manager	£72,300	£76,900 ↗	£81,500	£76,800	£74,300	£80,500
Project Manager	£60,000	£65,200 ↗	£70,400	£56,700	£53,900	£68,300
Quality Engineer	£40,300	£43,400 ↗	£46,400	£40,200	£37,800	£45,500
Quality Inspector	£29,000	£31,300 ↗	£33,700	£29,500	£26,700	£32,800
Quality Manager	£43,800	£47,800 ↗	£51,800	£44,500	£44,300	£50,100
Systems Engineer	£57,000	£62,600 ↗	£68,100	£58,500	£56,200	£65,600

↗ **8%** increase in **Quality Engineer** average salaries this year.

↗ **7.4%** increase in **Quality Manager** average salaries this year.



6.2%

salary growth
versus 2.5% UK
average growth



Regional insight

Becky Hole

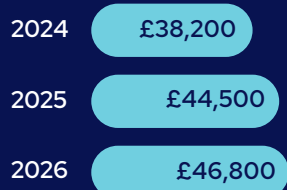
Regional Director, Reed

Roles on the rise

Engineering Manager



Production Manager



Quality Inspector



" A pivotal event in the country was the closure of the blast furnaces at Tata Steel, at the end of 2024, which led to approximately 3,000 job losses. This created a sudden surge of experienced engineers, particularly those with mechanical backgrounds, into the job market. Initially, this surplus of jobseekers made recruitment challenging for some companies, as the volume of available talent temporarily outpaced the number of open roles across South Wales.

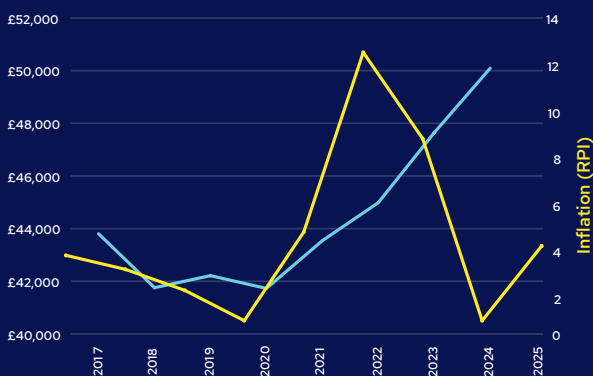
However, the market has shown resilience. Since mid-2025, there has been a noticeable recovery, with an increase in engineering jobs becoming available. This recovery is partly driven by government-supported retraining programmes, which have helped displaced engineers transfer their skills to other industries and adapt to new technologies.

A key trend driving the current market is the widespread move towards automation in manufacturing. This has created a strong demand for engineers with electrical, control, and automation expertise. As a result, many companies are now focusing on upskilling their existing workforce, training mechanically biased engineers to become multi-skilled. This emphasis on training and development is a significant draw for junior professionals and those looking to futureproof their careers. The most pronounced skills gap is now at the senior end, with a shortage of experienced, electrically biased engineers.

Salaries in the Welsh engineering sector are stabilising. But a geographical disparity remains, particularly in areas like Newport, where companies must compete with the higher salaries offered in nearby Bristol. This often forces employers in South Wales to offer more competitive packages to attract and retain local talent.

Looking ahead, the primary challenge for Welsh engineering firms will be talent retention. As companies invest heavily in upskilling their employees, they face the risk of losing them to larger, global manufacturers that can offer premium salaries. Smaller businesses, in particular, will need to find ways to remain competitive, not just on pay, but also by offering clear progression paths and positive work environments to hold on to their skilled engineers. //

Average salary in region vs UK inflation rate (RPI)



West Midlands



Role	2026			2025	2024	2027
	Min	Average	Max	Average	Average	Projection
CNC Programmer	£34,400	£37,400 ↗	£40,400	£34,200	£31,500	£39,200
CNC Setter/Operator	£31,000	£33,900 ↗	£36,800	£31,700	£29,500	£35,500
Design Manager	£55,900	£63,800 ↗	£71,700	£63,200	£61,100	£66,800
Electrical/Electronics Design Engineer	£44,400	£50,600 ↗	£56,900	£47,100	£48,100	£53,000
Electronics Engineer	£42,800	£46,800 ↘	£50,800	£47,500	£43,800	£49,000
Engineering Manager	£51,400	£56,500 ↘	£61,700	£57,800	£54,500	£59,100
Engineering/Technical Director	£82,600	£97,600 ↘	£112,600	£100,900	£77,200	£102,200
Field Service Engineer	£36,600	£40,100 ↗	£43,600	£37,800	£36,100	£42,000
Maintenance Manager	£46,700	£50,500 ↗	£54,300	£50,100	£46,900	£52,900
Maintenance Technician	£37,800	£40,200 ↗	£42,600	£38,300	£38,100	£42,100
Manufacturing Engineer	£44,200	£47,700 ↗	£51,200	£45,600	£44,300	£49,900

↘ **3.3%** decrease in **Engineering/Technical Director** average salaries this year.

↗ **0.8%** increase in **Maintenance Manager** average salaries this year.

Role	2026			2025	2024	2027
	Min	Average	Max	Average	Average	Projection
Mechanical Design Engineer	£40,800	£46,300 ↗	£51,700	£45,400	£42,700	£48,500
Process Engineer	£46,900	£49,700 ↗	£52,400	£46,700	£44,300	£52,000
Production Engineer	£41,400	£45,200 ↗	£49,000	£40,600	£39,800	£47,400
Production Manager	£42,800	£46,700 ↗	£50,500	£44,800	£44,300	£48,900
Programme Manager	£75,200	£80,700 ↗	£86,100	£50,300	£60,700	£84,900
Project Manager	£53,900	£59,200 ↗	£64,600	£58,400	£56,900	£62,000
Quality Engineer	£39,000	£41,400 ↗	£43,900	£40,700	£39,200	£43,300
Quality Inspector	£30,000	£31,700 ↘	£33,500	£32,000	£28,800	£33,200
Quality Manager	£48,700	£53,100 ↗	£57,400	£49,500	£49,100	£55,600
Systems Engineer	£58,200	£63,000 ↗	£67,900	£59,300	£52,300	£66,000

↗ **6.4%** increase in **Process Engineer** average salaries this year.

↗ **1.7%** increase in **Quality Engineer** average salaries this year.



5.4%

salary growth
versus 2.5% UK
average growth

Roles on the rise

Design Manager

2024	£61,100
2025	£63,200
2026	£63,800

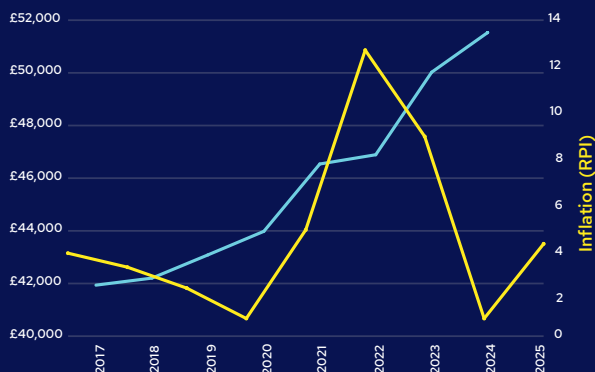
Field Service Engineer

2024	£36,100
2025	£37,800
2026	£40,100

Quality Manager

2024	£49,100
2025	£49,500
2026	£53,100

Average salary in region vs UK inflation rate (RPI)



Regional insight

Theresa Robinson
Regional Manager, Reed

“ The West Midlands is particularly dominant in production, automotive, machinery, and metalwork. As a major hub for the automotive industry, the region is home to a diverse range of companies, including those involved in complex remanufacturing projects for both commercial and military vehicles.

One of the most significant challenges in the West Midlands is a pronounced skills gap affecting businesses across the board. The demand for skilled professionals, from production operatives to highly specialised technicians, far outstrips the available supply. This issue is intensified by the unique nature of the work in the region. For example, some businesses operate machinery that is decades, or even centuries, old. Finding technicians with the knowledge to maintain and repair this legacy equipment is incredibly difficult, as these skills are not commonly taught anymore.

Similarly, in the automotive sector, there is a need for technicians who can do more than just follow a standard procedure. Companies involved in remanufacturing require individuals who can adapt their skills to strip down and rebuild a wide variety of engines and vehicle components, not just one standard model. This requires a level of versatility and problem-solving that is becoming increasingly rare. As a result, employers are encouraged to be more flexible in their hiring, looking for people with strong foundational skills who can be trained to meet specific business needs.

Beyond skills shortages, businesses in the West Midlands face the challenge of employee retention. To attract and keep talent, some companies are adopting progressive policies like a four-day working week. Employers who cannot offer such flexibility must find other ways to add value, such as creating multi-skilled roles. This not only makes work more engaging but also builds a more resilient and adaptable workforce.

However, a lingering ‘old school’ mentality in some corners of the industry presents a barrier to progress. To thrive, businesses must embrace modern, inclusive recruitment and retention strategies. This includes considering sponsorship for overseas talent, which could unlock a new pool of skilled professionals and help bridge the persistent gaps in the local labour market. ”

Yorkshire & Humberside



Role	2026			2025	2024	2027
	Min	Average	Max	Average	Average	Projection
CNC Programmer	£34,700	£39,900 ↗	£38,600	£35,800	£31,700	£39,100
CNC Setter/Operator	£30,600	£35,300 ↗	£34,000	£31,600	£28,300	£34,500
Design Manager	£52,200	£66,300 ↗	£60,400	£55,800	£53,400	£62,000
Electrical/Electronics Design Engineer	£44,800	£54,700 ↗	£53,300	£48,100	£48,300	£52,100
Electronics Engineer	£42,800	£49,900 ↗	£45,600	£42,600	£41,200	£48,500
Engineering Manager	£53,300	£63,300 ↗	£60,600	£56,200	£54,200	£61,000
Engineering/Technical Director	£84,300	£100,600 ↗	£119,000	£84,900	£77,600	£96,800
Field Service Engineer	£36,500	£42,000 ↗	£40,800	£37,800	£34,900	£41,000
Maintenance Manager	£48,300	£53,200 ↗	£51,300	£47,700	£47,300	£53,100
Maintenance Technician	£33,700	£44,900 ↗	£41,100	£38,200	£37,700	£41,100
Manufacturing Engineer	£42,100	£49,100 ↗	£47,500	£44,400	£40,900	£47,700

↗ **8.7%** increase in Electronics Engineer average salaries this year.

↗ **8.8%** increase in Engineering/Technical Director average salaries this year.

Role	2026			2025	2024	2027
	Min	Average	Max	Average	Average	Projection
Mechanical Design Engineer	£41,700	£49,700 ↗	£47,600	£43,700	£43,200	£47,800
Process Engineer	£43,300	£54,000 ↘	£54,000	£49,700	£49,300	£50,800
Production Engineer	£35,200	£45,000 ↘	£54,300	£46,100	£41,100	£41,900
Production Manager	£44,000	£50,600 ↗	£49,200	£46,000	£44,100	£49,500
Programme Manager	£74,000	£82,100 ↘	£92,800	£84,000	£77,200	£81,600
Project Manager	£51,300	£61,300 ↗	£61,800	£56,200	£52,100	£58,900
Quality Engineer	£37,500	£44,100 ↗	£44,000	£40,400	£36,800	£42,700
Quality Inspector	£32,700	£35,700 ↗	£33,600	£32,000	£28,000	£35,800
Quality Manager	£45,800	£52,500 ↘	£53,900	£50,100	£48,700	£51,400
Systems Engineer	£58,300	£68,600 ↘	£70,800	£63,900	£58,300	£66,400

↘ **13%** decrease in Production Engineer average salaries this year.

↗ **6.9%** increase in Quality Inspector average salaries this year.



1.8%

salary growth
versus 2.5% UK
average growth

Roles on the rise

Engineering Manager

2024	£54,200
2025	£56,200
2026	£58,300

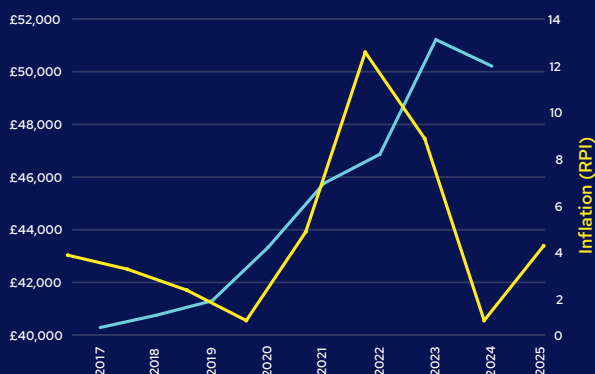
Production Manager

2024	£44,100
2025	£46,000
2026	£47,300

Quality Inspector

2024	£28,000
2025	£32,000
2026	£34,200

Average salary in region vs UK inflation rate (RPI)



Regional insight

Helen Barber
Regional Manager, Reed

" A prominent trend in Yorkshire and the Humber is the growing skills gap between traditional manufacturing and the burgeoning renewables and automation industries. While there is a strong push towards sustainability, many established local firms operate with older machinery, requiring a skill set that is diminishing as experienced engineers approach retirement.

This gap is intensified by the fact that the emerging talent pool is largely focused on renewable and automation technologies. While this is a positive step in the right direction, many often lack the practical experience to immediately fill roles. Consequently, companies are caught between needing experienced hands for existing equipment and finding the right people to drive their green transition. This situation creates a distinct divide in the labour market, which may require government incentives to encourage more individuals to train in engineering and bridge this crucial gap.

Adding to this complexity is the arrival of major international companies like McLaren and Boeing in the region and later this year Rolls Royce and BAE. These large corporations bring welcome investment and can offer highly competitive salaries, creating a significant disparity in the market. A welder, for instance, could see their hourly rate vary from £14 to £21 depending on the employer. This makes it difficult for smaller, long-standing local businesses to compete for talented people on salary alone.

To remain competitive, many of these smaller to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are leveraging flexibility as a key differentiator. Unable to match the pay packets of their larger rivals, they are instead offering more attractive benefits. These include flexible working hours to accommodate school runs, increased holiday allowances, and enhanced sick pay schemes. Furthermore, benefits like substantial pension contributions are becoming increasingly influential in a professional's decision-making process. For many, the value of work-life balance and long-term financial security now often outweighs a higher base salary, signalling a shift in what employees prioritise in their careers. "

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